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The poet and nature and The morning road



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Dr. Mullins says of Madison Cawein's work:

"Deep in us all is the love of nature. We need the imagination of the poet to restore to nature her aureole, to transfigure her with subtle meanings, to interpret for us the flight of setting suns and the round ocean. If the world would read Mr. Cawein's exquisite nature poems more generally and appreciatively, can any one doubt that our love of our great Commonwealth would be purified and elevated? There is a hoard of glorious gold, although not of the ordinary sordid kind, awaiting those who heed the 'Call of the Road.'

"As we follow we shall visit the tents where the tribes of beauty dwell, and see the wild-eyed girl of Spring awaking."

E. Y. MULLINS, D. D., L. L. D., Editor in Chief; in "*The Review and Expositor*", a Baptist Theological Quarterly, October, 1914.

The Poet and Nature AND The Morning Road

BY

MADISON CAWEIN

Member of the
National Institute of Arts and Letters



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LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

To

JOHN BURROUGHS

NATURALIST, POET AND PHILOSOPHER

With the greatest admiration for the work he has done
and is still doing for the True and Beautiful.

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THE POET AND NATURE.

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To Mr. Grant Richards, of London, England, acknowledgment is made for permission to reprint several poems from "Kentucky Poems" and "New Poems."

The poems in the division of the volume entitled, "The Morning Road," are herewith published in book form now for the first time, and a number of them made their first appearance in such periodicals as "The North American Review," "The Outlook," "The Youth's Companion," "The Bellman," "The Independent," "The Churchman," "Poet Lore," "The Writer's Bulletin" and "The Bookman."

INTRODUCTION

“A love for poetry once awakened, the possibilities in this opportunity for spiritual cultivation need end only with life itself. Best of all, the door once set ajar can never be wholly closed. Upon those into whose hands the key to this treasure-house of beauty and high ideals is given, rests a heavy responsibility. In the future, as in the past, shall this wealth of happiness be still the glory of the few, or shall it become the common inheritance of all? It is a question worth asking, and a question worth long striving to answer.” I quote from an article on “Poetry and the Schools” in a recent number of “The Outlook.”

I agree with the author, Harold Trowbridge Pulsifer, in all that is said in his article. Surely there is no better way of interesting a child in nature than through the musical medium of poetry. A well-selected poem that takes children into the woods and fields is a greater force for the development of their appreciation of the beauty of life than the most learned lecture on aesthetics in the class-room.

The series of Nature Poems herewith pre-

sented has been carefully selected from the author's various published books of verse with this end in view: namely, the directing of the child's mind toward the poetry and the beauty that lie so close to us and in such abundance and which a visit, even for an hour or two to the country, makes evident. The poems published at the close of the volume, under the heading "The Morning Road," are all new.

No analysis of the verses is intended or desired. The author does not think it necessary for any one's enjoyment of poetry to enter into long disquisitions on metrics. One need not know metre to understand poetry. Nor need he know how to parse and analyze a poem in order to get its meaning or take pleasure in it. When analysis and parsing are required of children, usually their enjoyment of the verses is destroyed. An understanding of all the words in a poem is hardly essential to its enjoyment. The picture that the verse presents to the mind counts for more than anything else to the reader, young or old.

With this idea in mind I have made the present selections, holding that the best system for awakening a child's interest in poetry is to present mental pictures in the simplest and directest words possible. Nature abounds in beauties which lend themselves readily, not only to the brush of

the artist, but to the pen of the poet who is eager to see and record them. Whether the reader or listener is entertained or not depends upon the manner in which these beauties are presented, and the words and phrases used in demonstrating them.

There is no better means of holding the thought of a pupil than the quoting of lines, or stanzas, from appropriate poems. This serves to assist him in remembering, or recording, the subject or the scene under consideration.

So poetry lures us, year by year,
Addressing now the spirit ear
With truths, and now the spirit eye
With dreams, whose force shall never die.

1914.

M. C.

THE POET AND NATURE

PROLOGUE.

“Now school is over, mother, we had better decide where to send the boys on their vacation,” said Mr. Thompson, looking at his wife who was busy sewing.

“Well, I think the country is the best place for children to visit in summertime;” replied Mrs. Thompson, looking up from her work.

“Here they come now,” said her husband. “We’ll ask them which they prefer; to go to the Springs or to the Babbits’?”

At this his two sons, Harry and Charles, and his nephew, John, who resided with the Thompsons, came laughing into the room, with greeting.

Harry was fourteen years of age, a tall, handsome boy, with soft, dreamy gray-blue eyes. He was fond of books and had already read most of the volumes in his father’s small, but select library of ancient and modern classics.

At the age of ten he began to write. He kept a diary, which pleased his parents. They encouraged him in writing, because such exercises

sharpened his faculty of observation. Having cultivated this practice, everything in life and nature had for Harry interest and aspect not perceived by his youthful companions.

Charlie was two years his junior and John, his cousin, one year. Charlie and John were not dreamers. They had, however, exuberance of spirits, and were always ready for a good time at home or school. They were fond of books, too, and had read many that parents often forbid their children: novels for instance; but these boys had happily selected the classic works of Scott, Dickens, Bulwer Lytton, Fenimore Cooper and the like, instead of tales of murder and nameless crimes. They had read some poetry also, but their love for the greatest of all arts was still dormant awaiting the proper teacher to awaken it. They had just returned from school, now closed after examinations, and were anxious to know where they were to spend their vacation.

“Where would you boys like to go this Summer?” asked Mrs. Thompson as they seated themselves.

“To the Babbits’! to the Babbits’!” was the unanimous answer.

“Oh,” remarked Mr. Thompson, “I see you have been talking it over between meals, and

have made a decision before we began thinking about it.”

“The Babbits’?” inquired Mrs. Thompson, laying aside her sewing and smiling at the subdued excitement of the lads who seemed afraid that their decision was not going to be endorsed by their elders.

“Isn’t it strange, mother,” said Mr. Thompson, “that we had already decided on their spending the vacation with the Babbits?’”

“Yes, it is,” said she. “I am glad they like the Babbits. They are cultivated farming people, and Mr. Babbit loves and recites poetry like a Professor of Literature.

“If you approve, mother, I’ll write the Babbits to-morrow that our boys are to visit them,” said Mr. Thompson, rising and going to the door.

“Fine! Fine!” shouted all the boys as with one breath.

“But,” said Mr. Thompson with a twinkle in his eye, “Harry must promise to keep a faithful account of all your doings and report to me at the end of the season, showing me the record in his diary.”

“I’ll be glad to do it, father; more than glad; because you’re a good critic and that’s what a writer needs.”

"Yes, son; that's what he needs."

And that's how it came about that we have this record of a Summer vacation and what was said and done therein. Harry Thompson was a conscientious boy and took pains to be correct in the incidents he reported. He also copied every poem that was recited or read to the boys by Mr. Babbit and the "Brownboro Poet," in the Babbits' home, the woods, or the neighboring fields. That is why we now have his record in book form. Why should we not enjoy it as they did?

I.

THE BABBITS.

School was over in June and mother, after consulting with father, decided to permit us to spend our vacation with the Babbits. Mr. Babbit was a farmer, and well-educated. In addition to his farming he owned and worked a water-mill which stood on a bank of the creek below the hill occupied by his farm. He had one son, named Roy, about my own age (fourteen years), and a daughter named Mary, two years younger.

Roy was a strong, bright, good-looking lad, who with his sister Mary attended the district school at Brownsboro in Fall and Winter, and assisted his father on the farm in Spring and Summer. He loved the country and was not afraid of work. The farmhouse stood on a partly wooded hill and was surrounded by huge locust trees, whose blossoms in May supplied the bees with fragrant honey which they stored in hives under a little shed at one end of the kitchen garden.

The vineyard and orchard lay behind the house, and beyond these began the forest which crowded

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over the hill into the valley and across the creek, continuing its course to the opposite hills and over their tops to the country beyond.

We were met at the station by Mr. Babbit and Roy who came in a shaky vehicle drawn by two horses of questionable age. The father and son hailed us heartily and assured us there was no danger in trusting ourselves to the rickety wagon and old horses, as both horses and rig, in spite of appearances, were trustworthy. After purchasing several packages of various sizes and stowing them away under the seats of the wagon, Mr. Babbit was ready to drive us home.

We passed into a long and rather dusty lane bordered on both sides by maple trees here and there, but for the greater part by intricate hedges of blackberry briars, sassafras, trumpet-vine, teasel, elder, and horsemint, within whose tangle every now and then we caught sight of an old rail-fence tottering and moldering into decay. At the end of this lane we struck the creek road, a wild rough wagon-way, now following the creek over its rocky bed, sometimes hub-deep in the slowly flowing water, and then edging the stream that held its deeper and swifter course to the river. Here it was that Mr. Babbit, to our surprise and

The Babbits

entertainment, revealed a phase of his nature to which we boys had hitherto been blind: a knowledge of poetry, of which he was a student and lover.

He began by saying: "I hope you boys have been brought up with an appreciation of poetry. Nothing helps one in the enjoyment of nature so much as an apt quotation from some poet, living or dead, classic or of the humbler order. That he shall interpret or describe the beautiful in harmonious lines is all I ask of him. He helps us to realize, in some more intimate way, the beauties of nature. Take, for instance, this sonnet which I clipped from the 'Brownsboro News' yesterday: let us note how it brings out the beauty of this rough, old road which we are bumping over. It is called 'The Creek Road':"

Calling, the heron flies athwart the blue
That sleeps above it; reach on rocky reach
Of water sings by sycamore and beech,
In whose warm shade bloom lilies not a few.
It is a page on which the sun and dew
Write glowing annals in dawn's sparkling speech;
A laboratory where the wood-winds teach,
Dissect each scent and analyze each hue.
Not otherwise than beautiful, doth it

The Poet and Nature

Record the happenings of each summer day;
Where we may read, as in a catalogue,
When passed a thresher; when a load of hay;
Or when a rabbit; or a bird that lit;
And now a barefoot truant and his dog.

As he finished the sonnet a rabbit ran across the way directly in front of us and plunged into the bushes. Here to avoid a rather deep portion of the creek the road ascended a hill of some height and at its top the stream was spanned by what to our city eyes seemed a barn set squarely over it. It happened, however, to be a bridge roofed and boarded in upon two sides, forming a sort of tunnel of wood open at opposite ends.

Into this tunnel our team thundered, and craning our necks over the sides of the wagon we caught glimpses, through cracks in the worn flooring, of the creek rippling and foaming twenty feet below us. Mr. Babbit, on quitting the bridge and driving his team into the creek road again, turned to us and, flicking with the end of his whip, a horsefly from the ear of one of the horses, remarked:

“That bridge, like this road, is a subject for our Poet’s pen. Now listen and tell me if he has described it accurately:”

The Babbits

There, from its entrance, lost in matted vines,
Where in the valley foams a waterfall,
Is glimpsed a ruined mill's remaining wall;
Here, by the road, the black-eyed Susan mines
Its brass and bronze; the trumpet-trailer shines
Red as the plumage of the cardinal.
Faint from the forest comes the rain-crow's call
Where dusty Summer dreams among the pines.
This is the spot where Spring scrawls wildflower
verses

In primrose gold while, drowsing o'er his reins,
The ploughman, all unnoticing, plods along;
And where the Autumn opens milkweed purses
Of sleepy silver, while the corn-piled wains
Rumble the bridge like some deep throat of song.

As Mr. Babbit concluded, Roy remarked: "Father, I think I have met the Poet who wrote those sonnets. He is a middle-aged man who wanders around this part of the country a great deal and is a friend of the editor of the Brownsboro News. Once he stopped at our house and asked me for a drink of water. Another time, when I was searching for the cows, I met him sitting under a beech-tree by the 'Standing-Stone Creek' writing in a note-book which he held open on his knee."

"Yes," replied his father, "I know him also;

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and he, since I have told him I admired his verses, has promised to send me a copy of his book soon to be published in New York. I met him not long ago near our barn. He sat on the water-trough oblivious to everything but the book in which he was writing. After he had finished he looked up and seeing me bade me good-day. I asked him if he was an artist, and if he was sketching our barn. He said he was not a draughtsman, and yet he was sketching the old barn. He asked me to look at the sketch and give him my opinion of his craftsmanship. I took the book and read the following poem, of which he made me a copy. I have seen that old barn in a different light ever since I read his lines:”

Low, swallow-swept and gray,
Between the orchard and the spring,
All its wide windows overflowing hay,
And crannied doors a-swing,
The old barn stands to-day.

Deep in its hay the Leghorn hides
A round white nest; and, humming soft
On roof and rafter, or its log-built sides,
Black in the sun-shot loft,
The building hornet glides.

The Babbits

Along its corn-crib, cautiously
As thieving fingers, skulks the rat;
Or in warped stalls of fragrant timothy,
Gnaws at some loosened slat,
Or passes shadowy.

A dream of drouth made audible
Before its door, hot, harsh, and shrill
All day the locust sings. . . . What other spell
Shall hold it, lazier still
Than the long day's, now tell—

Dusk and the cricket and the strain
Of tree-toad and of frog; and stars
That burn above the rich west's ribbéd stain;
And dropping pasture bars,
And cowbells up the lane.

Night and the moon and katydid,
And leaf-lisp of the wind-touched boughs;
And mazy shadows that the fireflies thrid;
And sweet breath of the cows,
And the lone owl here hid.

We had reached a very rough place in the road, crossing a bed of rock over which the water foamed and fumed. The road here made a circle and then a halt, as it were, before it proceeded in a determined manner up a rather steep hill on which, in a breezy spot, we saw a quaint-looking

The Poet and Nature

farmhouse, and outbuildings, surrounded by locust trees.

Rounding a rock we came in sight of a picturesque building; a veritable relic of the past, an old grist-mill sinking into decay. We gave a shout. And Roy laughed and said, "Yes, we're home. And there's the old mill."

"Oh, won't we have fun playing there!" exclaimed John, "that is, if Mr. Babbit lets us."

"Well I should say so!" chimed in Charlie. I looked at Mr. Babbit and Mr. Babbit looked at me with a twinkle in his eye. "It's haunted;" he said in a sort of tragic whisper.

And I shouted, "I don't care! All the better for us! We'll have great fun looking for the ghosts!"

Built on the very edge of the creek rose the water-mill; its great wheel reflected in the clear pool below in which we could see the occasional flash of a minnow. Three gray stories with their three gray windows, like three gray eyes, looked down on the mill-race and the pool wherein the mill hung reflected. We all thought it an ideal place for play.

I asked: "Mr. Babbit, do you still grind corn in this old mill?"

The Babbits

He, smiling, said: "You would think from its appearance that its use is merely to decorate the landscape, Harry. But, son, I do use it sometimes for such menial business as the grinding of corn for my own and a few other families in the neighborhood. I don't think the ghosts, that have taken up their abode there, like it at all. The noise of the wheel and the mill-stones and cogs disturbs their meditation, and they resent it at night sometimes by raising a racket themselves."

"Ghosts?" we all gasped as in one breath.
"Fine!" "We'll strike up an acquaintance."

Then Roy chimed in with, "Father's just joking. Rats are the only ghosts in that mill. I've never seen any other kind there."

"Neither have I," said Mr. Babbit. "But that Poet claims it's haunted; he says so, too, in one of his poems, and as he is an authority on such subjects it must be true. He wouldn't have put it permanently into verse if there had not been some truth in the statement. Here's the poem. He told me he wrote it sitting on the mill-loft stair one rainy afternoon when there was no one about. And he declared he felt that something was looking over his shoulder all the time he was writing, but was afraid to confront it. When he had

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finished writing he mustered up courage and turned to look; but all he saw was a gray cat slinking away in a corner. Let me see if I can find that poem. Here it is."

And he selected one from a number of clippings which he drew from his coat-pocket, while Roy drove the horses leisurely up the hill.

On the wild South Fork of Harrod's Creek,
O'ergrown with creepers, if you should seek,
You will find an ancient water-mill,
As gray as a ghost, below a hill.
Its weedy wheel is not less still
Than its image that sleeps in the glassy pool
Where the moccasin swims; and, slimly cool,
Like streaks of light through blurs of sun,
The silver minnows and crawfish run.
So lone the place, in its sycamore
The blue crane builds; and from the shore
The heron wanders about its door.
The burdock sprawls on its sill of pine;
And in its pathway eglantine
And blackberry tangle and intertwine:
Ox-daisies checker with pearl and gold
The bushy banks of its mill-race old;
The owl in its loft as safely lairs
As the fox in its cellar, that hides and cares
Naught for the hunters who gallop by
With their baying hounds: the martins fly

The Babbets

Around its chimney and build therein;
And wasp and hornet, with murmurous din,
Plaster their nests, that none disturb,
On window-lintel and hopper-curb.

Once I stood in this old, gray mill,
Once as the day died over the hill,
And night came on; and stark and still
I met with phantoms upon its stairs;
Shadows, that took me unawares,
Eyed with fire and cowled with gloom—
Twilight phantoms that crowded, dark,
Its dim interior, each eye a spark
Of sunset, creviced, within the room—
While a moist, chill, moldering, dead perfume
Of crumbling timbers and rotting grain,
On floors all warped with the sun and rain,
Made of the stagnant air a cell,
'Round the cobwebbed rafters hung like a spell;
Making my mind, despite me, run
On thoughts of a hidden skeleton,
There in the walls; or, dripping dank,
Under the floor, 'neath a certain plank:
Glowering, grim in the mossy wet,
In its hollow eyes a dark regret.

I had entered when the evening-star
In the saffron heaven was sparkling afar,
In all its glory of light divine,
Like a diamond drowned in kingly wine;
And I stayed till the heavens hung low and gray,
And the clouds of the storm drove down and away,

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Like the tattered leaves of an autumn day;
And the wild rain beat on the rotting roof
The goblin dance of the Fiend's own hoof,
Till the spider dropped from its dusty woof:
And the thunder throbbed like a mighty heart;
And the wild wind filled each crannied part
Of the mill with moanings, that seemed to be
The voice of an ancient agony—
Till the beetle shrunk in its board of pine;—
While the lightning lit with its instant shine
The tossing terror of tree and vine. . . .

Then, all of a sudden, the storm was still—
And I saw *her* there, near the shattered sill,
At the window, gazing from the mill
Down in the darkness under the storm;
Around her flickering face and form
Unearthly glimmer. She seemed to lean
To the rushing waters that roared unseen.
A moment only she seemed to sway
Before me there in the lightning's ray,
Then vanished utterly away—
Like a blown-out light. . . .

And was it she,

The hapless maiden who died, they say,
Who flung herself on the mill's great wheel,
Long years ago, in her heart's despair?
Or was it a dream, a fantasy,
That the place and the moment made me feel,
And imagination imaged there?

The Babbits

I was almost afraid to look back at the mill when Mr. Babbit concluded. He then relieved Roy of the reins and chirruped the horses to quicken their gait.

Charlie and John laughed uneasily, and Roy remarked to his father that if he didn't watch out that Poet would give the mill a bad reputation. John said, "All the same, I hope it is true." And that was how I felt about it also. Mr. Babbit solemnly shook his head and said with a dubious smile:

"I'm not saying a word. This man must have seen things there that I have never seen, and heard things that I have never heard. How else could he have written that?"

"All imagination!" muttered Roy.

As we came opposite a bend in the hill-road Mr. Babbit pointed to a low-roofed building standing below the mill on the distant bank of the creek. Its porch, we could see, overhung the whirling waters of the stream, and locust trees, beeches, willows, and sycamores had grown up thickly about it, almost hiding it from view. Its roof we saw plainly, sagging, broken and overgrown with moss. The entire building, evidently through neglect and the undermining of the creek was sinking into decay.

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"That was once my grandfather's and my father's home," said he; "I was born in that house. The old place is trying to rival the mill in running down; and some big spring-freshet will finish the job for it one of these days. You saw how the porch was undermined. Every big rise in the creek brings the water up to its floor. It was the creek that drove us out of the old house and made us take refuge on the hill-top. That Poet loves the old home almost as much as I do; and one day when he and I were loafing about the place and I was reminiscent, he seated himself on the porch steps and wrote this sonnet:"

The hornets build in plaster-dropping rooms,
And on its mossy porch the lizard lies;
Around its chimneys slow the swallow flies,
And on its roof the locusts snow their blooms.
Like some sad thought that broods here, old per-
fumes

Haunt its dim stairs; the cautious zephyr tries
Each gusty door, like some dead hand, then sighs
With ghostly lips among the attic glooms.
And now a heron, now a kingfisher,
Flits in the willows where the riffle seems
At each faint fall to hesitate to leap,
Fluttering the silence with a little stir.
Here Summer seems a placid face asleep,
And the near world a figment of her dreams.

The Babbits

“I like that part about the wind’s being a ghost,” said John.

“Yes,” said Mr. Babbit; “that man seems to be clairvoyant; he’s always seeing or hearing things.”

“I imagine,” said Roy, “he’d be afraid of the dark.”

“Not he,” replied his father, touching the off-horse with the end of his whip. “He’s fond of it, as I can testify; having heard him say that he spends many a night by himself in the woods.”

The landscape of valley, stream and forest unfolded itself, like a moving-picture, before us as we mounted the hill. The day was nearing its close when we reached the farmhouse gate where we were met by Mrs. Babbit and her daughter, Mary, a shy but rather pretty red-cheeked girl of twelve.

We alighted, and were warmly greeted by the two. Mrs. Babbit helped Roy to remove the packages from the wagon, but we insisted on helping him to carry them, with our luggage, into the house.

“You boys must be hungry after your long ride. Mary and I will have supper for you in a little while—as soon as Mr. Babbit has

The Poet and Nature

unhitched and fed the horses.—Roy, while we're waiting for your father, you had better help Silas with the milking.”

Silas, whose acquaintance we made later on, was the Babbits' hired man—a negro of the type so well known before the war.

We carried our luggage up to the second-story room which was allotted to us. Its walls and ceiling were whitewashed and the floor was covered with a neat rag-carpet. It contained two double-beds, in one of which Charlie and I were to sleep; the other being for John and Roy. There was little or no furniture in this room, but plenty of pegs around the wall on which to hang our clothing. The room had two large windows also, one facing the west, the other the south; and thus we were to have plenty of fresh air and a breeze no matter how warm the day or night.

We had about completed our arrangements when Mrs. Babbit called us to supper. Soon we were seated around a well-provided board of country fare, products of the farm. Mr. Babbit sat at one end of the table and his wife at the other. Grace having been said we needed no invitation to fall to and appease our appetites, for indeed we were hungry enough to have been en-

The Babbits

ticed by far inferior fare. There were fresh soda-biscuits and home-hived honey, oozing from the comb; home-cured ham and fried eggs; baked potatoes; string-beans; asparagus and peas; while for drink, there was plenty of sweet milk and buttermilk.

The lamp had been lighted in the middle of the table before we had supped. Outside the twilight deepened into dusk, and was flecked here and there by the golden green flashings of the fireflies. An owlet called in the woods nearby, and the drowsy song of the crickets arose. Then far off we heard the call of a whippoorwill.

“Mother, do you know where that poem named ‘Evening on the Farm’ is?” Asked Mr. Babbit, turning to his wife.

“The one the Poet left here in payment for his night’s lodging last year?” inquired Mrs. Babbit.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Babbit.

“I’ll fetch it,” replied his wife, quitting the table.

“Here it is,” she said, returning and placing a large scrap-book before her husband, who deliberately turned the leaves until he found the poem.

“This is it!” he exclaimed. And, settling himself in his chair, he read:

The Poet and Nature

From out the hills where Twilight stands,
Above the shadowy pasture lands,
With strained and strident cry,
Beneath pale skies that sunset bands,
 The bull-bats fly.

A cloud hangs over, strange of shape,
And, colored like the half-ripe grape,
Seems some uneven stain
On heaven's azure, thin as crape,
 And blue as rain.

By ways, that sunset's sardonyx
O'erflares, and gates the farm-boy clicks,
Through which the cattle came,
The mullein-stalks seem giant wicks
 Of downy flame.

From woods no glimmer enters in,
Above the streams that, wandering, win
To where the wood pool fills,
Those haunters of the dusk begin,—
 The whippoorwills.

Adown the dark the firefly marks
Its flight in gold and emerald sparks ;
And, loosened from his chain,
The shaggy watchdog bounds and barks,
 And barks again.

The Babbets

Each breeze brings scents of hill-heaped hay;
And now an owlet, far away,
Cries twice or thrice “T-o-o-w-h-o-o”;
And cool dim moths of mottled gray
 Flit through the dew.

The Silence sounds its frog-bassoon,
Where, on the woodland creek’s lagoon,—
Pale as a ghostly girl
Lost ’mid the trees,—looks down the moon
 With face of pearl.

Within the shed where logs, late hewed,
Smell forest-sweet, and chips of wood
Make blurs of white and brown,
The brood-hen cuddles her warm brood
 Of teetering down.

The clattering guineas in the tree
Din for a time; and quietly
The henhouse, near the fence,
Sleeps, save for some brief rivalry
 Of cocks and hens.

A cowbell tinkles by the rails,
Where, streaming white in foaming pails,
Milk makes an uddery sound;
While overhead the black bat trails
 Around and ’round.

The Poet and Nature

The night is still. The slow cows chew
A drowsy cud. The bird that flew
And sang is in its nest.
It is the time of falling dew,
 Of dreams and rest.

The beehives sleep; and round the walk,
The garden path, from stalk to stalk
The bungling beetle booms,
Where two soft shadows stand and talk
 Among the blooms.

The stars are thick: the light is dead
That dyed the west: and Drowsyhead,
Tuning his cricket-pipe,
Nods, and some apple, round and red,
 Drops over-ripe.

Now down the road, that shambles by,
A window, shining like an eye
Through brows of vine and gourd,
Shows Age and young Rusticity
 Seated at board.

“That describes us, doesn’t it?” said Mr. Babbit looking up from his book.

As he spoke we again heard the notes of the whippoorwill; nearer this time and seemingly in the branches of the locust tree that stood guard over the garden gate. Mr. Babbit, pushing back

The Babbits

his chair, said, "Now, boys, let us adjourn to the porch and give mother and Mary a chance to clear the table and wash the dishes. I want to recite to you something I read recently in the 'Atlantic Monthly': I think it is by this same writer who has given us so many verses on Nature; putting this region, you might say, into poetry for the first time in the history of Kentucky. He calls this 'Whippoorwill Time.' "

Let down the bars; drive in the cows:

The west is barred with burning rose.

Unhitch the horses from the ploughs,

And from the cart the ox that lows,

And light the lamp within the house:

The whippoorwill is crying,

"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,"

Where the locust blooms are falling

On the hill;

The sunset's rose is dying,

And the whippoorwill is crying,

"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill;"

Soft, now shrill,

The whippoorwill is crying,

"Whippoorwill."

Unloose the watchdog from his chain:

The first stars wink their drowsy eyes:

A sheep-bell tinkles in the lane,

And where the shadow deepest lies

The Poet and Nature

A lamp makes bright the window-pane:
The whippoorwill is calling,

“Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,”
Where the berry-blooms are falling

On the rill:

The first faint stars are springing,
And the whippoorwill is singing,

“Whippoorwill, whippoorwill;”

Softly still

The whippoorwill is singing,
“Whippoorwill.”

The cows are milked; the cattle fed;

The last far streaks of evening fade:
The farm-hand whistles in the shed,

And in the house the table's laid;

The lamp streams on the garden bed:
The whippoorwill is calling,

“Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,”

Where the dogwood blooms are falling

On the hill;

The afterglow is waning

And the whippoorwill's complaining,
“Whippoorwill, whippoorwill;”

Wild and shrill,

The whippoorwill's complaining,

“Whippoorwill.”

The moon blooms out, a great white rose;

The stars wheel onward toward the west:
The barn-yard cock wakes once and crows;

The farm is wrapped in peaceful rest;

The Babbits

The cricket chirrs; the firefly glows:
The whippoorwill is calling,
“Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,”
Where the bramble-blooms are falling
On the rill;
The moon her watch is keeping
And the whippoorwill is weeping,
“Whippoorwill, whippoorwill;”
Lonely still,
The whippoorwill is weeping,
“Whippoorwill.”

As Mr. Babbit concluded Mrs. Babbit and her daughter, Mary, joined us on the porch. Roy was nodding in his chair and Charles and John were yawning.

“The whippoorwill has had the effect I desired;” remarked Mr. Babbit with a laugh. “Better wake up now—at least long enough for prayers, and then to bed. It’s nearly nine o’clock.”

With that he led the way into the parlor, and lighted the paper-shaded lamp on the marble-topped center-table. We followed sleepily.

The parlor was furnished with a table, an old-fashioned organ, a rocking-chair, a sofa, upholstered in plush, and several horse-hair covered chairs of a very stiff appearance. A large family

The Poet and Nature

Bible lay on the table; and several family photographs, a marriage certificate, and a motto, worked in red crewel, "The Lord is my Shepherd," adorned the papered walls. The floor was covered with a Brussels carpet of flowery pattern.

Mr. Babbit read a short chapter from the Bible; then, kneeling down, offered up a prayer in good old reverential fashion. We, following his example, knelt with him softly. When he concluded we joined in his vigorous "Amen." Rising we said good-night, and with Roy went to our room where we found a lighted lamp awaiting us. We undressed, put out the light, and were soon safe and sound asleep.

II.

THE POET.

The next morning we were up and out bright and early, and, until summoned to breakfast, ran about the farm. Now we would take a look into the barn with its freshly littered stalls, whinnying horses, and spacious loft packed with clover; and now into the garden with its lines of heavy-headed poppies, larkspurs, old-fashioned roses, zinnias, honeysuckle, phlox, and hollyhocks.

We saw nothing of Mr. Babbit until we sat down to breakfast, when he entered. As he seated himself at the table he said, "Well, you boys, I suppose, have your plans mapped out for to-day's entertainment. You've a lot of playing to do and a big playground to play over. Just as soon as you've finished breakfast I suppose you'll get busy."

We laughed, and John said, "Get busy? Yes, I guess we will!"

"Well," said Mr. Babbit, "I hope you won't allow your play to interfere with your cultiva-

The Poet and Nature

tion of poetry. An appreciation of the poets is necessary for the making of character. Your education would be worth very little without a knowledge of poetry. It is one of the most refining influences we have in life. Mother holds the same opinion with me. Now, as I see you have finished your breakfast, as a starter to the day's work or play, let me read you this, by my friend the Poet, from this morning's 'Brownsboro News.' It is called 'Enchanted Ground.' ”

All around,
In the forest, is enchanted ground:—
Where the sunlight throws
Airy-minted gold
To the lily and rose,
Reaching flowers, like hands, to seize and hold:
Where the brooks unfold
Scrolls of music, crystal melody,
For the hills to hear,
Leaning low an ear,
Emerald-veined, on many a listening tree;
Where the winds work at their necromance,
Rustling-robed, with hands that glint and glance,
Weaving, dim a-trance,
Lights and shadows into tapestry,
Glimmering with many a wildflower dance:—
Quaker-ladies in a saraband,
Twinkling hand in hand;

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And, demurely met,
Orchids in a stately minuet,
Flirting eyelids at the amorous bee,
Bird and bee, in lyric ecstasy:—
There, where none may hear,
Magic, Mystery,
Parents of Romance,
Ever near,
Work dim wonders with the rain and sun,
Mist and dew:
There the two
Plot enchantments, old yet always new—
Never hurried; never done;
Dreaming, weaving,
Heart-perceiving
Dreams man's soul is heir unto:
Waving, beckoning him to follow
Down the world, through holt and hollow;
Bidding see with the spirit's eyes,
Heed and hear with the soul's deep heart,
Till the Mind, by the two made wise,
Comes to a shadowy world apart,
And, hand in hand with its ecstasies,
Enters the gateway of Surprise,
And finds its dreams realities.

“Now then run along and amuse yourselves.
I'll give Roy a half holiday in honor of your arrival.”

After Mr. Babbit had gone to attend to some

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farm duties with Silas, the man of all work, we four boys, Roy leading, made our way to the creek. There we inspected the old mill, inside and out; the foot-bridge, made of a few rickety boards, with a single railing for handhold, laid across the creek; and the dam, with its water lilies and cat-tails, surrounded by great elms and beeches and willows.

Then we decided to go in swimming. Soon we were splashing about in the cool clear water; and all count of time was lost until we heard the dinner bell (a large iron bell set on a pole near the kitchen-door and worked on a crank by a rope attached to it), which called us to the midday meal. Hastily dressing we decided to return in the afternoon and catch some fish, a number of which we saw darting about in the clear waters of the creek.

At dinner Mr. Babbit said: "Roy, I wish you would take old Foxtail Fanny (Roy's horse) and ride over to Brownsboro and fetch the mail and a few articles your mother needs. The boys and I will do a little exploring of the creek while you are gone. I know a famous fishing place. We'll take our rods along."

So after Roy had departed we provided our-

The Poet

selves with cane-poles and lines, hooks and a bucket of worms, dug from the garden's rich loam.

With Mr. Babbit in the lead we advanced, like a Greek phalanx, upon the creek. Soon we were busy about the dam, some in one place, some in another, our corks bobbing about on the water. Mr. Babbit watched us, seated on the trunk of a fallen sycamore.

Through the willows and briars we could see the gable and one end of the old mill with its mossy wheel. All was very still. The fish refused to bite. Suddenly our host began:

“If the fish aren’t going to bite I might as well begin talking. This scene reminds me of something I had almost forgotten, written by that Nature-loving poet whose work you should be well acquainted with by this time. It was written about this very creek and that old mill there. Listen now; maybe by the time I’ve finished the fish will begin to bite. These lines may prove to be more effective than those wriggling worms:”

Years of care cannot efface
Visions of the hills and trees
Closing in its dam and race;
Nor the mile-long memories
Of the mill-stream’s lovely place.

The Poet and Nature

How the sunsets used to stain
Mirrors of the waters lying
Under eaves made dark with rain!
Where the redbird, westward flying,
Lit to try its song again.

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Dingles, hills and woods, and springs,
Where we came in calm or storm,
Swinging in the grapevine swings,
Wading where the rocks were warm,
With our fishing-poles and strings.

Here the road plunged down the hill,
Under ash and chinquapin,—
Where the grasshoppers would drill
Ears of silence with their din,—
To the willow-girdled mill.

There the path beyond the ford
Takes the woodside; just below
Shallows that the lilies sword,
Where the scarlet blossoms blow
Of the trumpet-vine and gourd.

Summer winds, that sink with heat,
On the pelted waters winnow
Moony petals that repeat
Crescents, where the startled minnow
Beats a glittering retreat.

The Poet

Summer winds, that split the husk
 Of the peach and nectarine,
Trail along the amber dusk
 Hazy skirts of gold and green,
Spilling balms of dew and musk.

Where with balls of bursting juice
 Summer sees the red wild-plum
Strew the gravel; ripened loose,
 Autumn hears the pawpaw drum
Plumpness on the rocks that bruise:

Could I find the sedgy angle,
 Where the dragonflies would turn
Slender flittings into spangle
 On the sunlight? or would burn
Where the berries made a tangle?

Could I find the pond that lay
 Where vermillion blossoms showered
Fragrance down the daisied way?
 That the sassafras embowered
With the spice of early May?

Could I find it—should I seek—
 That old mill? Its weather-beaten
Wheel and gable by the creek?
 With its warping roof; worm-eaten,
Dusty rafters worn and weak.

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Where old shadows haunt old places,
Loft and hopper, stair and bin;
Ghostly with the dust that laces
Webs that usher phantoms in,
Wistful with remembered faces.

Moonbeams? Or the twinkling tip
Of a star? Or, in the darkling
Twilight, fireflies? there that dip—
As if night a myriad sparkling
Jewels from her hand let slip.

Where I dream my youth still crosses
With a corn-sack for the meal,
Through the sprinkled ferns and mosses,
To the gray mill's lichenized wheel,
Where the water drips and tosses.

The reminiscent close and its sentimental effect were lost on John who shouted as Mr. Babbit finished reading, "I've got a bite!" and proceeded to draw in a catfish of medium size. Charlie, too, succeeded in catching a spoonbill; but I, with my usual luck, caught nothing.

Dissatisfied, we wound up our lines and started for another part of the creek where Mr. Babbit said there was a famous fishing-hole. We passed the mill and crossed the foot-bridge, and were about to strike into a by-path when we

The Poet

heard a voice nearby repeating in a kind of chant
the following stanzas :

My heart is high as the day that's clear,
As the wind in the wood that blows ;
My heart is high with a mood of cheer,
And glows like a sun-blown rose.

My heart is high, and up and away
Like a bird in the skies' deep blue ;
My heart goes singing through the day,
As glad as a bee i' the dew.
My heart, my heart is high : its beat

Is wild as the scent o' the wood,
The wild sweet wind, with its pulse o' heat,
And its musk o' blossom and bud.

My heart is high ; and it leads my feet
Where the sense o' Summer is full,
To woods and waters where perfumes meet,
And hills where the creeks run cool.

My heart is one, is part of the heart,
Of the joy of the bee that comes
To suck i' the flowers, that dip apart
For his dusty body that hums.

My heart is glad as the glad redstart,
The flame-flecked bird, the spotted bird,
Whose lilt my soul has got by heart,
Fitting each note with a word.

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God's love! I tread the wind and air!
Am one with the hoiden wind;
And the stars that hide in the blue, I swear,
Right soon i' my hair I'll find.

To live high up, a thing of mist,
With the cloud-shapes in the skies,—
With their limbs of pearl and of amethyst,—
That laugh cerulean eyes!

To creep and to lie, like an elfin thing,
In the aching heart of a rose!
In the bluebell's ear to cling and swing,
And whisper what no one knows!

To live on wild-honey, as fresh, as thin
As the rain night leaves in a flower,
And roll forth, golden from feet to chin,
In the pollen's Danaë-shower!

Or free, bird-hearted, bend back the throat,
With a dare-you look at the blue,
And launch from my soul one wild, true note,
Is the thing that I would do!

God's life! the blood of the earth is mine!
And the mood of the earth I'll take,
And brim my soul with her wonderful wine,
And sing till my heart doth break!

“That's my Poet!” shouted Mr. Babbit. And without waiting for us plunged through the brush-

The Poet

wood of willows and sycamores that hid the singer from view. We heard him greeting someone heartily, and making our way in the direction of his voice found him seated on the bank of the creek with a stranger. He was a man not yet forty years of age, brown-haired and blue-eyed, with no distinguishing marks of a poet, to-wit: long locks, flowing cravat and queer raiment. On the contrary, he was a conventionally dressed person who smiled and gave us a pleasant greeting as we approached him to shake hands.

“You’ve been fishing, I see by the proud display of your catch,” said the poet.

“Yes,” I said, “but we’re not satisfied yet. Two fish don’t amount to much. We want to catch enough for supper to-night.”

“I was just taking the boys to my famous fishing-hole when we heard your voice,” said Mr. Babbit. “I am as anxious as they are to make a fine display when we return home. Won’t you join us?”

“With pleasure. I have been sitting here waiting for some kind people, like yourselves, to come along and relieve my lonesomeness,” responded the poet.

“While they’re fishing you can read me some

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of the verses you have written since the last time I saw you," said Mr. Babbit.

"If the young men here don't object, I shall be delighted," he replied.

"Before we start to the fishing-place, I want to call your attention to that pretty pink-and-yellow flower at your feet. That's goat's-rue or wild sweet-pea, as some folks about here name it. I had just finished a little lyric about it when I heard you coming through the woods. I began my crooning to acquaint you with my presence. I call the flower, where all the insects are so busy gathering honey, neither goat's-rue nor wild sweet-pea, but 'The Tavern of the Bees':"

Here's the tavern of the bees :
Here the butterflies, that swing
Velvet cloaks, and to the breeze
Whisper soft conspiracies,
Pledge their Lord, the Fairy King :
Here the hotspur hornets bring
Fiery word, and drink away
Heat and hurry of the day.

Here the merchant bee, his gold
On his thigh, falls fast asleep ;
And the armored beetle bold,
Like an errant-knight of old,

The Poet

Feasts and tipples pottles-deep:
While the friar crickets keep
Creaking low a drinking-song,
Like an Ave, all day long.

Here the baron bumblebee,
Grumbling in his drowsy cup,
Half forgets his knavery:
Dragonflies sip swaggeringly,
Cavaliers who stop to sup:
To whose boast come whining up
Gnats, the thieves, that tap the tuns
Of the honeyed musk that runs.

Here the jewelled wasp, that goes
On his swift highwayman way,
Seeks a moment of repose,
Drains his cup of wine-of-rose,
Sheathes his dagger for the day:
And the moth, in downy gray,
Like some lady of the gloom,
Slips into a perfumed room.

When the darkness cometh on,
Round the tavern, golden green,
Fireflies flit with torches wan,
Looking if the guests be gone,
Linkboys of the Fairy Queen:
Lighting her who rides, unseen,
To her elfin sweetpea-bower,
Where she rests a scented hour.

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“You see,” said the Poet as he finished, “the fairies are busy about you all the time. They walk invisible, fernseed-footed; and only poets can see them, being often admitted to their revels, and recipients of their favors. Get rid of that sceptical look, young man,” said he, addressing John who had a wise, “I-know-better” expression on his face.

“I know they are always about us,” continued the Poet. “The woods and fields are full of them. I have seen them, not only in the night-time tripping it by the light of the moon, but in the broad daylight, right here on this road that we are about to follow to the fishing-pool. Ask Mr. Babbit. He knows.”

“I do that!” ejaculated the farmer. “I believe that our Poet is as intimate with the fairies as Mr. William Shakespere was in his day. And that’s saying a great deal. But let’s be getting along to our fishing, and on the way there Mr. Poet can regale us with some more facts regarding the fairy community.”

“Surely,” said the Poet as we arose and took a wild path through the woods. “You see this path we are following? It is a favorite with the little people. I have seen things here. For—”

The Poet

Where the path leads through this dell
All the way is under spell:
There, beneath that old oak tree,
Where the light lies dim at noon,
Elfland held its revelry,
Danced and left its yellow shoon—
You may call them, if you choose,
Whippoorwill-shoes.

There between a stalk and stem,
Where the crowfoot hangs its gem,
Golden in the fern's green hair,
Swings a hammock, dips a bed,
Fairyland has woven there
Out of mist and moonbeam thread—
Never web was spider-spun
Like this one.

Yonder fungus, pink and brown,
Which the slim snail silvers down
Cautiously, as if afraid
Of intrusive visitors,
Is a table elfins laid
For their feast beneath the stars—
Never mushroom, you may wis,
Was like this.

To this tree now lay your ear:
In its heart you too may hear
Whispered wonders, as have I:
How, in frog-skin pantaloon,

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Moth-wing gown and butterfly,
Pixies tripped here by the moon—
Never breeze, or sap, I know,
Murmurs so.

Now and then, whence none can tell,
Sudden fragrance sweeps the dell,
And your eyelids flutter to—
'T is some glamour, elfin-wise,
Passing very near to you,
Putting glimmer in your eyes—
Never wild-rose scent, or sun,
So could run.

Thus it is I look around
When I tread this fairy ground—
There is witchcraft in the place;
There is magic; there is spell;
You can feel it like a face,
Gazing, yet invisible.
I have felt it; you may feel—
None reveal.

I for my part was convinced by the attitude of the Poet and by his seriousness that he actually believed what he said. Mr. Babbit, also, looked wise and willing to back him up in his statements.

"I've seen many happenings along this road that I never could explain," he remarked. "Why, sir, I was returning from fishing one day, and

The Poet

had one solitary little sunfish in my bait-pail with some water. I was taking it home to Mary to put in her aquarium, you see. Suddenly off there in the woods I heard a cry, a low, queer, baby-like cry; I set my bucket with the fish in it at the foot of that big beech tree, and started to look for the thing that was crying in the woods. I hunted and hunted, but I never did find anything but a kingfisher flying about the creek. So I returned to my tree and my bucket. I didn't dream of looking in my bucket to see if the little sunfish was still there. But when I got home and called Mary and handed her the pail and told her I'd brought a fish for her aquarium, why, boys, believe me! there wasn't any fish there at all! Gone!—I don't know where!—Vanished into thin air, as it were.

“Now I see how it was: While I was looking for the thing that was crying in the woods, the fairies slipped over here and liberated the little captive I had in my bait-bucket. Don't you think so, Mr. Poet?”

“Evidently!” replied the Poet. “Now, boys, you know Mr. Babbit to be a sensible and practical man, and yet he has had mysterious experiences like myself. Let me tell you a little

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story, too, of what happened to me one night when all alone in the woods. Sit down under this tree. There is plenty of time to catch those fish you want for supper. Here it is; the record of that night, which I put into rhyme the next morning after my experience.”

“Hold on a minute!” interrupted John. “I want to ask about the fish that disappeared. Mr. Babbit, don’t you think that kingfisher got your fish while you were off in the woods looking for the thing you heard crying?”

“I didn’t think of that, Johnny boy. It might have robbed my bucket perhaps, and it might not. Anyhow, the fish was gone, that’s sure.”

“Let me say right here,” said the Poet, “no one ever heard of a kingfisher’s looking for fish in a bait-pail before. Unless the kingfisher was a fairy in disguise, who had taken on the form of a bird to deceive Mr. Babbit. Well, are you ready to hear more about the fairies that inhabit these woods?”

“Yes, sir,” we replied; and the Poet proceeded in this manner:

I sat with woodland dreams one night
Before the moon rose round and white,
And saw the moth-like minions dim,
Who guard the wild rose when asleep,

The Poet

Come forth: The spirits, small and slim
(Gold-Pollen, Prickle, Rain-Bright, Trim),
Who hang around each wildflower's rim
A carcanet of dew, and keep
Its fair face clean of things that creep.

I saw them, busily as ants,
Hang with pale gold the woodland plants:
On bindweed tendrils, one by one,
I saw them loop long rows of bells,
That swung in crystal unison;
Then up the silken primrose run
(Moth-Feather, Tripsy, Light-Foot, Fun),
And to the stars unclasp its shells,
That filled with sweetness all the dells.

I saw the shapes that house in trees,
That guard the nests of birds and bees:
Like sudden starlight gleamed their hands
And leaf-like bodies, glimmering green,
When through the woods they moved in bands
(Wisp, Foxfire, Burr, Jock-o'-the-Brands),
And dotted night with firefly wands;
Peering with pin-point eyes between
The fernleaves for some harm unseen.

I saw the fancies wild, for whom
The crickets violin the gloom,
Lead in a pageant long of dreams;
To see which even the sleepy snail

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Thrust out its horns; and from the streams
(Spray-Top-and-Ripple-chased it seems),
The trout leaped silvery, showering gleams
Of beryl 'thwart the pearly-pale
Low moon that raised her fairy sail.

And with the moon came presences
Of gnome-like things that toil 'mid trees;
That build the ghost-flower in a night;
And set their grotesque shoulders to
The toadstool's root and heave it white
(Troll, Nixen, Kobold, Glowworm-Light),
Into the star-dusk; and stretch tight
The webs that frost themselves with dew
Adown each woodland avenue.

Then slighter forms of film and foam
Rose from the streams and sat, a comb
Of moon-pearl in their hands: the fays,
Who herd the minnows; keep from harm
The dragonfly that sleeps or sways
(Foam-Flutter, Starstep, Ripple-Rays),
Like some bright jewel, on the Day's
White breast, when, starred, a golden charm,
The water-lily opens warm.

These are the dreams I sat with when
The owlet hooted in the glen;
These are the dreams that came before
My eyelids in this forest gray—

The Poet

Children of Fancy, Fairy Lore—
Puck, Ariel, and many more—
Wearing the face that erst they wore
For Shakespere; and, in some strange way,
As real now as in his day.

“That’s what I call speaking with authority!” said Mr. Babbit. “Come along. Let’s find that fishing-hole.”

We scrambled to our feet, and with the Poet followed Mr. Babbit along a cowpath into the woods. The way was dim, being roofed over with wild-grape vines; here and there the sunlight played hide-and-seek with the wildflowers, and the moss was dotted with many toadstools, as brilliant in coloring, red, and white, and yellow, as were the flowers themselves.

“We aren’t far from the fishing-hole now,” said Mr. Babbit. “This place is called ‘Owl’s Roost.’ Plenty of owls here if you look for them. Many a one of my pullets have they cost me.”

The Poet did not say anything for a while, but walked on in a meditative mood. Then suddenly he began pointing things out to us along the path, and muttering to himself. At last he broke forth in this manner, calling our attention to a great oak tree with knotted and gnarly branches:

The Poet and Nature

Last night beneath this ancient tree,
Dim in the moonlight and the ferns,
The elfin folk held revelry,
I know by what my soul discerns
Mysteriously.

For, look you, where that circle runs
Of bluets, winking very wise,
The rapture of those tricksy ones
Has put confusion in their eyes,
That meet the sun's.

And, mark you, how that toadstool there
Protrudes its bulk in Falstaff state—
It too has seen, I well will swear,
An elf, and learned to imitate
His pompous air.

And where that lichen lays a streak
Of rose, fair as a flowering stock,
The place but recollects her cheek,
The fay's, who danced upon this rock
Above the creek.

And hark! between this rock and root,
Where shrill the cricket pipes away,
A fairy dropped a magic flute,
That never stops, but still must play
For fairy foot.

The Poet

And that same beetle, glittering by,
Has mailed itself, as it hath seen
Titania's guard, in royal dye
Of bronze and green, when round their queen
They caught its eye.

The toad that squats, observing naught,
By yonder mushroom's bench and bar,
Has donned the Puck-wise look he caught
From Oberon's chief councilor
In judgment sought.

The bees that murmur, drowsy here,
The gnats and wood-flies, but repeat
The music which a sleepy ear
Caught when all Elfland rose to greet
Queen Mab with cheer.

Oh, there is more than eye may see,
That to the moon is visible!
If it could speak, this ancient tree,
What would it say? What would it tell
Of Faërie?

But it—it keeps its council close,
As do the crickets and the flowers:
Ah, could it speak and tell of those!
What tales we'd hear, of elfin powers!
Of things none knows!

The Poet and Nature

At last we reached our fishing-hole. While baiting our hooks and preparing for a big catch the Poet and Mr. Babbit engaged in earnest conversation. I heard Mr. Babbit say, with astonishment:

“Not here in these woods!” and the Poet replied, “Yes; here in these woods. Believe me or not as you please, but I am sure I saw him.”

“The wood-god Pan, emigrated from Arcadia? —impossible!” exclaimed Mr. Babbit.

We went on fishing.

Then the Poet said quietly, “Yes; emigrated from Arcadia, and adapting himself without difficulty to our American woods and waters.”

“Do you hear that, boys?” inquired Mr. Babbit with some excitement.

We had dropped our lines in a shady stretch of water surrounded by butternut, beech, and hickory trees, and sat quietly watching our corks and the dragonflies that darted over them.

“Do you hear that?” repeated Mr. Babbit. “This man says he has seen the Greek god, Pan, in these woods. You’d like to hear about it, wouldn’t you?”—Charlie jerked in his line with a fish squirming on its hook. This caused a little delay as to our answer which was finally in the affirmative.

The Poet

"We'd all like to hear it ;" said Mr. Babbit.

The Poet, removing his hat and laying it carefully beside him, seated himself at the foot of the beech tree, and, looking cautiously around as if fearful of being observed or overheard by some invisible presence, began in a sort of half whisper—a strange light in his face and eyes—the following narrative which took the form of verse, without any seeming effort on his part :

It was among these very woods,
When darkness closed the wild hills in,
And, with a swiftness that eludes,
The spider-life came forth to spin :
Between a mighty tree and rock,
Dim in a ray of moonlight thin,
I saw Pan sitting, wild of lock,
His huge hands resting on his chin,
Where crickets made a drowsy din.

His beard poured down a waterfall
Before him ; and his moss-like hair
Rolled silence 'round him like a wall
Around a tower brown and bare :
His tree-like limbs, that spanned the stream,
His shoulders, like an eagle's lair,
Loomed, lichen-mottled : and the gleam
Of fireflies streamed into the air
From out the starlight of his stare.

The Poet and Nature

His body bristled thick with thorns
 And awns of wild-oats, like a hill;
And like the toiling of the Norns,
 His strength, though quiet, was not still.
The twisted roots that were his feet,
 From which the waters ran a rill,
Were made the temporary seat
 Of voices wild, batrachian-shrill,
 That all the darkness seemed to fill.

The fingers tangled in his beard
 Were knotted like the boughs of trees;
And on them gaunt the owl appeared,
 The whippoorwill made melodies:
And through the forest evermore
 There went a droning as of bees—
The calling of Pan's heart, that poured
 Protection on the least of these—
 The forest-life that clasped his knees.

“Gee!” said John, “I wish I could see him!
Let's set a trap for him. It'd be fine to capture
Pan. A circus would pay a lot of money for him,
wouldn't it?”

“Undoubtedly,” assented the Poet with a
smile. “A lot of money.”

“Harry, you've got a bite!” sang out Charlie
at that moment. And turning I saw my cork
bobbing up and down on the water. Quickly I

The Poet

drew in my line with a fish wriggling on the end of it. Charlie then caught what they all declared was a black bass; and John and I added to our string two or three chubs of small size. Mr. Babbit's fishing-hole had not disappointed us in the least. We had secured a very good mess of fish. It was growing late.

"We'll have to be going now," said Mr. Babbit. "Come on, boys, these fish will have to be prepared for supper, and that will take a little time. I hope you will join us, sir?" said he, addressing the Poet, who had arisen and was about to take leave of us. "Come on, and help us sample these fish, since you helped us catch them."

"I suppose it was *my lines* that attracted the fish and not the bait on the boys' hooks," said the Poet. "Well, since you put it that way, I'll have to accept. Lead on Mr. Babbit! And you, my friends," addressing us with mock-serious courtesy, "'stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once.' I have a half notion that my young friend there" (pointing to John who was hanging back untangling his line from a snag protruding from the creek bank) "in his rapacious desire for wealth is making an opportunity for himself, with this end in view, to-wit: the hunting

The Poet and Nature

of my old friend Mr. Pan, and the final capture and disposal of him to some circus. Let me tell you, my young friend" (shaking his finger mockingly at John) "Mr. Pan is my own particular property, and I shall warn him of your designs upon his freedom. If he is to be captured I have first call, having seen him first. Being a Nature Poet I too am sadly in need of money.

"You know nature poetry is not lucrative. And only a few critics regard it with any sort of favor. But what is the good of addressing you boys on this weighty subject? We'll let the poetry societies of England and America settle the question. Come! let's get on."

"I should say so! Here's our path," said Mr. Babbit.

We were trudging along when the Poet remarked: "This path reminds me of a path I used to know when a boy like you, and where I went dreaming of all sorts o' things. I wrote something about it not long ago, and, if you would care to hear it, I'd be glad to repeat it now."

Its friendship and its carelessness
Had led me many a mile,
Through goat's-rue, with its dim caress,
And pink and pearl-white smile;

The Poet

Through crowfoot, with its golden lure,
And promise of far things,
And sorrel with its glance demure
And wide-eyed wonderings.

It led me with its innocence,
As childhood leads the wise,
With elbows here of tattered fence,
And blue of wildflower eyes;
With whispers low of leafy speech,
And brook-sweet utterance;
With bird-like words of oak and beech,
And whistlings clear as Pan's.

It led me with its childlike charm,
As candor leads desire,
Now with a clasp of blossomy arm,
A butterfly kiss of fire;
Now with a toss of tousled gold,
A barefoot sound of green,
A breath of musk, of mossy mold,
With vague allurements keen.

It led me with remembered things
Into an oldtime vale,
Peopled with fairy glimmerings,
And flower-like fancies pale;
Where fungous forms stood, gold and gray,
Each in its mushroom gown,
And, roofed with red, glimpsed far away,
A little toadstool town.

The Poet and Nature

It led me with an idle ease,
A vagabond look and air,
A sense of ragged arms and knees
In weeds grown everywhere;
It led me, as a gipsy leads,
To dingles no one knows,
With beauty burred with thorny seeds,
And tangled wild with rose.

It led me as simplicity
Leads age and its demands,
With bee-beat of its ecstasy,
And berry-stained touch of hands;
With round revealments, puff-ball white,
Through rents of weedy brown,
And petaled movements of delight
In roseleaf limb and gown.

It led me on and on and on,
Beyond the Far-Away,
Into a world long dead and gone—
The world of yesterday;
A fairy world of memory,
Old with its hills and streams,
Wherein the child I used to be
Still wanders with his dreams.

By the time he had finished we were at the house. Mr. Babbit took charge of the fish, and, after cleaning them, delivered them, with a

The Poet

flourish, to Mrs. Babbit, who, with Mary, was busy in the kitchen. Roy hailed us from the cow-lot where he and Silas had finished milking, and were already putting the milk away in large brown crocks in the spring-house.

“I think it’s going to rain,” remarked Mr. Babbit, as he turned a weather-eye to the west where a cloud was lazily rising and obscuring the sun.

“From that prophet in the trees, the rain-crow, I think so too,” said the Poet, pointing to a slender slate-colored bird that was sounding a curious gurgling note in the great oak whose branches spread broadly above us.

“What bird is that?” asked John; turning to look in the direction the Poet indicated.

“That’s the American Cuckoo, better known in this vicinity as the rain-crow. I have a word about him which may interest you boys. Sometimes he proves himself a false prophet; but usually he is correct in his weather forecasts. I think he will prove himself so this evening.”

“That’s what we want him to do to-day,” said Mr. Babbit. “It has been hot, and we need rain badly. Read us your ‘Rain-Crow’ while we are waiting for the call to supper.”

The Poet and Nature

And the Poet, nothing loath to comply, proceeded:

Can freckled August—drowsing warm and blond
Beside a wheat-shock in the white-topped mead,
In her hot hair the yellow daisies wound,
O bird of rain, lend aught but sleepy heed
To thee? When no plumed weed, no feathered
seed

Blows by her; and no ripple breaks the pond,
That gleams like flint within its rim of grasses,
Through which the dragonfly forever passes
Like splintered diamond?

Drouth weights the trees; and from the farmhouse
eaves

The locust, pulse-beat of the summer day,
Throbs; and the lane, that shambles under leaves
Limp with the heat—a leagne of rutty way—
Is lost in dust; and sultry scents of hay
Breathe from the panting meadows heaped with
sheaves—

Now, now, O bird, what hint is there of rain,
In thirsty meadow or on burning plain,
That thy keen eye perceives?

But thou art right. Thou prophesiest true.
For hardly hast thou ceased thy forecasting,
When up the western fierceness of scorched blue,

The Poet

Great water-carrier winds their buckets bring
Brimming with freshness. How their dippers ring
And flash and rumble! Lavishing large dew
On corn and forest land, that, streaming wet,
Their hilly backs against the downpour set,
Like giants, loom in view.

The butterfly, safe under leaf and flower,
Has found a roof, knowing how true thou art;
The bumblebee, within the last half hour,
Has ceased to hug the honey to its heart;
While in the barnyard, under shed and cart,
Brood-hens have housed. But I, who scorned thy
power,
Barometer of birds—like August there—
Beneath a beech, dripping from foot to hair,
Like some drenched truant, cower.

A storm was approaching. Over the hills, where the sunset was trying to deliver the day's last message in crimson to the world, great bulks of purple-black clouds were lifting toward the zenith their airy battlements of vapor; now and then, like the flashes of far-off artillery, the lightning was seen, and a muttering of distant thunder was heard. The trees bent themselves before the wind and we watched the swallows high in the heaven circling and soaring like whirling leaves, rejoicing at the approach of the storm.

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By the time we were seated at the supper-table the rain was upon us. It grew so dark, although it was only six o'clock, that the lamp had to be lighted. The thunder crashed and rolled, rumbling into echoes among the tossing hills. The lightning gleamed and flickered and flashed and the rain streamed down in torrents. Mr. Babbit, with the Poet beside him, was in high spirits. "Just what we needed for the corn!" He exclaimed. "Now we are sure of a fine crop. This rain will help it along."

"It's God keeping His promise of plenty to old Earth," said the Poet. "The poetry of the rain is great poetry, I tell you. No epic ever written by man can equal the grandeur, the beauty, and the awe of a thunderstorm."

"You are right, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Babbit. "No eloquence of man, whether in music or in language, can equal the eloquence of the elements."

By the time we had concluded our meal the storm had lessened to a considerable degree. Mr. Babbit then turned to the Poet and remarked, "Now that the thunder and rain permit us to speak, may be you will read to us again. Being a nature-poet, you must have something about rain in your note-book."

The Poet

“Yes; I was thinking of some stanzas I wrote last year,” rejoined the Poet, “after a storm like the one that is passing over us now. Let me see:”

Around, the stillness deepened; then the grain
Went wild with wind; and every briary lane
Was swept with dust; and then, a stormy black,
Hillward the tempest heaved a monster back,
That on the thunder leaned as on a cane;
And on huge shoulders bore a cloudy pack,
That gullied gold from many a lightning-crack:
A big drop splashed and wrinkled down the pane,
And then—field, hill, and wood were lost in rain.

At last, through clouds—as from a cavern hewn
In Night’s dark heart—the sun burst, angry roon;
And every cedar, with its weight of wet,
Against the sunset’s fiery splendor set,
Frightened to beauty, seemed with rubies strewn:
Then in drenched gardens, like sweet phantoms
met,
Dim odors rose of pink and mignonette;
And in the east a confidence, that soon
Grew to the calm assurance of the moon.

“That’s what I call realism,” said Mr. Babbit.
rising and leading the way into the parlor.

The rain had almost ceased by this time, and
scents and dripping sounds breezed into the room
through the opened windows and doors. Suddenly

The Poet and Nature

a sound was heard, coming from one of the locust-trees that surrounded the house; a hoarse, vibrating, twanging note answered by another of a much higher and more penetrating quality from some tree in the garden.

Nature seemed to shake herself vigorously at the sound, as a dog, who has been in the water, responds to her master's call and shakes the moisture from herself as she runs. A quick pattering and rush of drops was heard upon the roof and the grass as the trees bent themselves suddenly to a gust of wind.

The raucous note did not cease with the gust but rose louder and more insistent.

“What’s that?” asked John.

“Tree-toads,” answered Roy.

“I am astonished at you, Roy,” said the Poet. “You said that as if you had great contempt for the little creatures. Listen. That sound, to my ear, is one of the coolest and sweetest in nature. As good, in a way, as any song any bird utters. It epitomizes in its expression all that rain means to me on a close summer day. Cool and deliberate it drives home its argument in favor of wetness with notes that correspond to the guttural calling of the rain. To me, moreover, it says other things

The Poet

that the rain at night, when one lies awake and listens to its patterings on the roof, repeats in one's brain: things of mystery and magic that nature conceals from us.

"I wrote something once about the tree-toad.
If you care to hear it I'll be glad to read it to you."

"Go ahead," replied Mr. Babbit. "Let us hear it. You're the first man who ever put a tree-toad into rhyme, I'll be bound! But wait a moment; here come mother and Mary. They would like to hear what you have to say, I am sure."

Mrs. Babbit and Mary had entered and quietly seated themselves in the little circle that was all attention as the Poet opened his note-book and proceeded to read:

Secluded, solitary on some underbough,
Or cradled in a leaf, 'mid glimmering light,
Like Puck thou crouchest: Haply watching how
The slow toadstool comes bulging, moony white,
Through loosened loam; or how, against the night,
The glowworm gathers silver to endow
The darkness with; or how the dew conspires
To hang, at dusk, with lamps of chilly fires
Each blade that shrivels now.

O vague confederate of the whippoorwill,
Of owl and cricket and the katydid!
Thou gatherest up the silence in one shrill

The Poet and Nature

Vibrating note and send'st it where, half-hid
In cedars, twilight sleeps—each azure lid
Drooping a line of golden eyeball still.—
Afar, yet near, I hear thy dewy voice
Within the Garden of the Hours apoise
On dusk's deep daffodil.

Minstrel of moisture! Silent when high noon
Shows her tanned face among the thirsting
clover
And parching meadows, thy tenebrious tune
Wakes with the dew or when the rain is over.
Thou troubadour of wetness and damp lover
Of all cool things! Admitted comrade boon
Of twilight's hush, and little intimate
Of eve's first fluttering star and delicate
Round rim of rainy moon!

Art trumpeter of Dwarfland? does thy horn
Inform the gnomes and goblins of the hour
When they may gambol under haw and thorn,
Straddling each winking web and twinkling
flower?
Or bell-ringer of Elfland? Whose tall tower
The liriodendron is? From whence is borne
The elfin music of thy bell's deep bass,
To summon fairies to their starlit maze,
To summon them or warn.

“Well,” remarked Mr. Babbit, “you’ve got
me thinking now. I’ll never hear a tree-toad sing
again without thinking of fairies and elves and

The Poet

gnomes. For fear that they may compel you to join their revels to-night on your way through the woods, I'm going to ask you to stay with us until to-morrow; and maybe I won't let you go then. You know too much about the little folk that dance by moonlight; they'll carry you off some night—if you don't look out.

"Mother, fix up that sofa with a blanket or two and sheets and pillows. This Poet must stay the night with us, I don't care what he says, or how he protests."

"My dear friend," replied the Poet with a smile, "you save me the embarrassment of asking you for a night's lodging. I, too, am afraid the fairies may get me to-night. Or old Pan himself (having overheard John's designs upon his freedom to-day when in the woods) may capture me to get even for betraying him, and display me as a curiosity to his forest followers. I am delighted to accept your invitation to remain; but between ourselves, you couldn't have got rid of me had you wanted to. If you had turned me out, I had intended to go to the barn and sleep in the loft."

"If that's settled then, let's have prayers and to bed," said Mr. Babbit.

III.

THE GARDEN.

The next morning I was up before any of the other boys. It was cloudy and damp but not disagreeable—cool, not sultry as it usually is after a Summer thundershower. I dressed and hurried down stairs and out into the garden that smelled spicy from the rain.

As I walked about looking at the flowers I came upon the Poet. He was seated on the old rock-wall, made of loosely arranged stones, uncemented, which fenced in three sides of the garden; the fourth side facing the house, being of pickets with a latch-gate in the center. He had his note-book on his knee, and, lifting his eyes when he saw me, said:

“I’ve done a day’s work while everybody else was sleeping. Would you care to hear what I have written this morning?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied, “if you will be so kind.”

“Good boy, Harry!” said he. “I’ve noticed that you are always attentive when we speak of poetry, or when Mr. Babbit, or I, may have anything to read.

The Garden

“You love poetry, and you will find it a comfort during your whole life, my boy.”

Old homes among the hills! I love their gardens,
Their old rock-fences, that our day inherits;
Their doors, 'round which the great trees stand
 like wardens,
Their paths, down which the shadows march
 like spirits;
Broad doors and paths that reach bird-haunted
 gardens.

I see them gray among their ancient acres,
 Severe of front, their gables lichen-sprinkled—
Like gentle-hearted, solitary Quakers,
 Grave and religious, with kind faces wrinkled—
Serene among their memory-hallowed acres.

Their gardens, banked with roses and with lilies—
 Those sweet aristocrats of all the flowers—
Where Springtime coins her gold in daffodillies,
 And Autumn mints her marigolds in showers,
And all the hours are toilless as the lilies.

I love their orchards where the gay woodpecker
 Flits, flashing o'er you, like a wingéd jewel;
Their woods, whose floors of moss the squirrels
 checker
With half-hulled nuts; and where, in cool re-newal,
The wild brooks laugh, and raps the red wood-pecker.

The Poet and Nature

Old homes! old hearts! Upon my soul forever
Their peace and gladness lie like tears and
laughter;
Like love they touch me, through the years that
sever,
With simple faith; like friendship, draw me
after
The dreamy patience that is theirs forever.

He had just finished reading, when the garden gate clicked and Mary entered coming toward us.

“Mary, Mary! quite contrary!” sang the Poet when he saw her. “I suppose you have come to inform us that breakfast is ready?”

“No, sir,” answered Mary. “Mother wanted some fresh flowers for the table and parlor and I have come to gather them.”

“How fortunate it is that Harry and I are here!” said the Poet, delighted.

“He and I will serve as flower-boys to your Ladyship.”

“That’s very good of you,” replied Mary demurely. “But I think I can manage things by myself.”

“Quite contrary! as I remarked before. And a pretty little dimple in her smile,” said the Poet. “A lovely place for a fairy to hide in, eh, Harry?”

The Garden

I laughed, and said nothing. And the Poet continued :

“You know, Mary, every flower has its elf, and the elves revenge themselves on little girls like you, whenever they have the chance, for snipping off their heads.”

“No, sir, I didn’t know. I read in a book once all about Flower Fairies, but, of course, it wasn’t true;” said Mary, with a toss of her curly head.

“But it *was* true, young lady; and some day you’ll find out for yourself that it *is*, and regret that you did not take warning,” said the Poet with some emphasis. “Now, I’ll tell you of the different elves that I have seen, so that you may be on your guard against them. And Harry here may take warning also, of the last elf particularly:”

An elf there is who stables the hot
Red wasp that sucks on the apricot;
An elf, who rowels his buzzing bay,
Like a mote on a ray, away, away;
An elf, who saddles the hornet lean
And dins in the ear o’ the flowering bean;
Who straddles, with seed-pod cap awry,
The bottle-green back o’ the dragonfly.

And this is the elf who sips and sips
From clover-horns whence the perfume drips;
And drunk with dew, in the glimmering gloam,
Awaits the wild-bee’s coming home;

The Poet and Nature

In ambush lies where none may see,
And robs the caravan bumblebee:
Gold bags of honey the bees must pay
To the bandit elf of the fairy-way.

Another ouch the butterflies know,
Who paints their wings with the hues that glow
On flowers: Squeezing from tubes of dew
Pansy colors of every hue
On his blossom-palette, he paints the wings
Of butterflies, moths, and other things.
This is the elf the hollyhocks hear,
Who dangles a brilliant i' each one's ear;
Teases at noon the pane's green fly,
And lights at night the glowworm's eye.

But the dearest elf, so the poets say,
Is the elf who hides in an eye of gray;
Who curles in a dimple or slips along
The strings of a lute to a lover's song;
Who smiles in her smile and frowns in her frown
And dreams in the scent of her glove or gown;
Hides and beckons, as you may note,
In the bloom or the bow of Mary's throat.

“Now, then, will you believe me, Harry?” said the Poet, pointing to Mary's face that had flushed a peach-blush color when she heard her name mentioned in the poem. “She looks just like one of her own balsams, pink and pearl, and—behold the elf in the dimple, the very center of it!”

The Garden

Mary, embarrassed, turned her back on him. I went to her side and, without asking her permission, helped to gather the flowers, while the Poet lounged nearby, leaning on the fence.

“You go on with your notes, please, while Harry and I gather the flowers. Here are roses, snapdragons, candytuft, mignonette, and honeysuckle,” Mary finally said, with some confusion.

“And why omit the morning-glories, Mary? Aren’t they pretty enough for you, or for the table?” asked the Poet.

“Oh, yes, sir,” replied Mary. “But they fade as soon as they are cut, you see.”

“Perishable, eh?” said the Poet. “And that reminds me of a little story I once wrote. Would you mind hearing it while gathering your ‘silver-bells and cockle-shells and pretty-maids all in a row?’ ”

“I should love to hear it,” said Mary.

And the Poet recited the following while she busied herself among the flowerbeds:

They swing from the garden-trellis
In Ariel-airy ease;
And their aromatic honey
Is sought by the earliest bees.

The Poet and Nature

The rose, it knows their secret,
And the jessamine also knows:
And the rose told me the story
That the jessamine told the rose.

And the jessamine said: At midnight,
Ere the red cock woke and crew,
The fays of Queen Titania
Came here to bathe in the dew.

And the yellow moonlight glistened
On braids of elfin hair;
And fairy feet on the flowers
Fell softer than any air.

And their petticoats, gay as bubbles,
They hung up, every one,
On the morning-glory's tendrils,
Till their moonlight bath was done.

But the red cock crew too early,
And the fairies fled in fear,
Leaving their petticoats, purple and pink—
Like blossoms hanging here.

“How pretty!” exclaimed Mary. “That describes the morning-glory blossoms exactly. They *do* look like little striped fairy-petticoats? Don’t they? I never thought of it before, but they do. Well, I’ve finished,” said she shaking a bunch of dewy flowers at us.

The Garden

“Then let’s be going, or we’ll have the whole family out with a search warrant and nobody to blame but myself for delaying breakfast. Come on,” said the Poet.

As we made our exit from the garden we heard a peculiar kind of hic-coughing, or coughing noise back of us, in the garden. It came nearer and nearer, and at length I made it out to be the barking of some animal.

“What is it?” I inquired.

“Only a chipmunk,” answered Mary.

“In truer words, a ground-squirrel,” said the Poet.

“Oh, I know what a chipmunk is!” I said. “I’ve often seen them in the woods. But I never knew they barked like tree squirrels.”

“If you stoop a little, my son, and keep your eye on that old fence you may see the little fellows playing tag.”

“There they go!” cried the Poet as three brown-striped creatures ran nimbly past on the top of the fence. Mary had stopped and was waiting for us.

When we entered the dining-room we found everyone waiting. Mary arranged the flowers in vases for the breakfast-table and the center-table

The Poet and Nature

in the parlor. Soon we were seated to as substantial a breakfast as I have ever eaten. The menu was bacon and eggs, fried apples and mush, potatoes and corn-cakes with coffee and sweet milk.

“What were you and Harry up to, so early this morning?” asked Mr. Babbit, regarding the Poet and myself with an inquiring eye. “I heard you talking in the garden when Roy and I went to help Silas with the milking. I’ll wager you were reading the boy something that you wrote this morning before any of us were up. Let’s have it. It isn’t fair if you read it to him and won’t read it to us!” And Mr. Babbit pushed back his plate and looked with a smile at his guest.

“Well, that’s what I call taking an unfair advantage of a visitor,” responded the Poet. “Here I’ve been trying to hide from you all the morning, that I might not be compelled to read you any more of my literary stuff. I thought I gave you enough yesterday.”

“No, sir,” said Mr. Babbit, firmly. “You can never give us enough of that sort o’ stuff. Now, sir, are you, or are you not, going to let us have that poem?”

“This is what I call a hold-up!” cried the Poet. “Hands up! and deliver your poem or your life! Well, there’s no help for it, I see.”

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And he read “Old Homes,” the poem he had read to me earlier that morning, to the delight of all.

When he had finished he looked at me and then at Mary, as if there was some secret between us and remarked:

“Here is another I had forgotten; I should like to read it to you, if you have no objections. It is called ‘The Chipmunk.’ ”

“Oh, let’s have it!” I said. “We saw three of them playing catcher on the fence a while ago.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Babbit, “let’s have it at once.”

And the Poet read in a cheerful voice:

He makes a roadway of the crumbling fence,

Or on the fallen tree—brown as a leaf

Fall stripes with russet—gambols down the dense
Green twilight of the woods. We see not whence

He comes, nor whither (in a time so brief)

He vanishes—swift carrier of some fay,

Some pixy steed that haunts our child-belief—
A goblin glimpse upon a wildwood way.

What harlequin mood of nature qualified

Him so with happiness? and limbed him with
Such young activity as winds, that ride

The ripples, have, dancing on every side?

As sunbeams know, that urge the sap and pith

The Poet and Nature

Through hearts of trees? yet made him to delight,
Gnome-like, in darkness — like a moonlight
myth—
Lairing in labyrinths of the under night.

Here, by a rock, beneath the moss, a hole
Leads to his home, the den wherein he sleeps;
Lulled by near noises of the laboring mole
Tunneling its mine—like some ungainly Troll—
Or by the tireless cricket there that keeps
Picking its rusty and monotonous lute;
Or slower sounds of grass that creeps and
creeps,
And trees unrolling mighty root on root.

Such is the music of his sleeping hours.
Day hath another—'t is a melody
He trips to, made by the assembled flowers,
And light and fragrance laughing 'mid the bowers,
And ripeness busy with the acorn-tree.
Such strains, perhaps, as filled with mute amaze,
(The silent music of Earth's ecstasy)
The Satyr's soul, the Faun of classic days.

“You’re different from other poets. This is the first time, I’ll warrant,” said Mr. Babbit, “that the chipmunk was ever a subject for verse. Thank you, sir. I’m proud of you. You certainly get a deal of poetry out of the common, insignificant things of earth.”

The Garden

"There is poetry in the lowliest things: only a few of us ever see it, however," remarked the Poet.

"Yes, sir;" responded Mr. Babbit. "There's the grasshopper now. Keats wrote a poem about it, and a good one."

"Keats wrote of the English grasshopper, though," answered the Poet. "I have tried to put our noisy American insect into verse."

"Let's have it then," answered Mr. Babbit. "I'd like to compare the two—the English and the American."

"Very well," said the Poet:

What joy you take in making hotness hotter,

In emphasizing dullness with your buzz,

Making monotony more monotonous!

When Summer comes, and drouth has dried the water

In all the creeks, we hear your ragged rasp

Filing the stillness. Or—as urchins beat

A stagnant pond on which the bubbles gasp—

Your switch-like music whips the midday heat.

O, burr of sound, caught in the summer's hair,

We hear you everywhere.

We hear you in the vines and berry-brambles,

Along the unkempt lanes, among the weeds,

Amid the shadeless meadows, gray with seeds,

And by the wood, round which the rail-fence rambles,

The Poet and Nature

Sawing the sunlight with your sultry saw.

Or—like to tomboy truants, at their play
With noisy mirth among the barn's deep straw—

You sing away the careless Summer-day.

O, briar-like voice that clings in idleness

To Summer's drowsy dress.

You tramp of insects, vagrant and unheeding,

Improvident, who of the Summer make

One long, green meal-time, and for winter take
No care, aye singing or just simply feeding!

Happy-go-lucky vagabond—though frost

Shall pierce, ere long, your coat of green or
brown,

And pinch your body—let no song be lost,

But as you lived, into your grave go down—
Like some small poet with his little rhyme,

Forgotten of all time.

“Well, I don’t know,” began Mr. Babbit.
“It’s hard to say which I prefer—the English
or the American grasshopper. They are much
alike, I suppose; both shiftless insects, ‘improvi-
dent’ as our Poet puts it. But let’s adjourn to the
garden, where that catbird is singing.”

“That is a most agreeable suggestion,” said
the Poet, as we arose and followed Mr. Babbit.
By “we” I mean all except Mrs. Babbit and
Mary, who had some churning to do.

The Garden

“That catbird interests me very much indeed,” remarked the Poet. “Last Spring I heard one over there in the woods and his song became an inspiration to me. Let’s sit under this apple-tree, and, if you care to hear it, I’ll introduce you to my ‘Catbird.’ ”

As we were all eager to hear, the Poet read from his note-book as follows:

The tufted gold of the sassafras,
And the gold of the spicewood-bush,
Bewilder the ways of the forest pass,
And brighten the underbrush;
The white-starred drifts of the wild-plum tree,
And the haw with its pearly plumes,
And the redbud, misted rosily,
Dazzle the woodland glooms.

And I hear the song of the catbird wake
I’ the boughs o’ the gnarled wild-crab,
Or there where the snows of the dogwood shake,
That the silvery sunbeams stab;
And it seems to me that a magic lies
In the crystal sweet of its notes,
That a myriad blossoms open their eyes
As its strain above them floats.

I see the bluebell’s blue unclose,
And the trillium’s stainless white;
The birdfoot-violet’s purple and rose,
And the poppy, golden-bright!

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And I see the eyes of the bluet wink,
And the heads of the white-hearts nod;
And the baby mouths of the woodland pink
And sorrel salute the sod.

And this, meseems, does the catbird say,
As the blossoms crowd i' the sun:
“Up, up! and out! oh, out and away!
Up, up! and out, each one!
Sweethearts! sweethearts! oh, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Come listen and hark to me!
The Spring, the Spring, with her fragrant feet,
Is passing this way! Oh, hark to the beat
Of her bee-like heart! Oh, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Come! open your eyes and see!
See, see, see!”

He had hardly finished when we saw a flash
of scarlet. It was a redbird which lit in a tree
nearby and began to sing.

“There!” exclaimed the Poet, “that reminds
me!—I had almost forgotten him: he is one of our
sweetest singers, almost a rival of the catbird. I
wrote something about him, too. If you would
like to hear it, I’ll be glad to read it to you.”

“Go ahead,” said Mr. Babbit. “If it’s as
good a song as that he’s singing now, we sha’n’t
object, shall we, boys?”

“No, sir!” I answered for us all.

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The Poet read as follows:

Red clouds and reddest flowers,
And now two redder wings
Swim through the rosy hours;
Red wings among the flowers,
And now the redbird sings.

God makes the red cloud's ripples
Of flame that seem to split
In rubies and in dripples
Of rose where rills and ripples
The singing flame that lit.

Red clouds of sundered splendor—
God stooped and spake a word,
Rich, sweet, and wild and tender—
And in the sunset splendor
The word became a bird.

He flies beneath the garnet
Of clouds that flame and float—
When Summer hears the hornet
Hum round the plum, turned garnet—
Heaven's music in his throat.

"You describe the two birds as I have never heard them described before," said Mr. Babbit.
"Why, I could hear them singing in your lines!"

"No; in those trees," said the Poet with a smile. "There they are, catbird and redbird, as you observe."

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“And there’s a bee-martin, too,” exclaimed Roy, pointing to a branch. “I wish you’d write something about him and show up *his* character as it should be shown.”

“Why?” asked Charlie. “What does a bee-martin do?”

“Eats our bees,” replied Roy.

“Don’t they sting him?” asked John.

“Not they!” answered Roy. “The martin is too quick for them. He has the bees down his throat before they know they’re caught. Once I killed a bee-martin and found his craw stuffed full of bees. *Our* bees, too.”

“How did you know they were our bees, son?” asked Mr. Babbit. “Were they marked with our initials?”

“No, sir; but I knew it—because he had been loafing about our garden;” replied Roy.

Just then Silas entered the garden carrying a hoe. Mr. Babbit said to him, “Well, Si, it’s time you were getting to work on those weeds. They are about to take the garden.”

“Yaas, sah,” said Silas.

“And, Roy,” said Mr. Babbit, “you and I had better give that corn the ploughing it needs. The rain has put the soil in fine condition. Come on.”

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"I'm afraid I'll have to be going also," said the Poet. "I have an engagement with the Muse down in the valley."

"You'll be back to dinner, won't you?" asked Mr. Babbit.

"Not to dinner," answered the Poet, "but to supper, if you have no objections."

"We'll enter no protest if you'll promise to read us what the Muse has to say to you there in the valley," said Mr. Babbit.

"All right," answered the Poet.

When they had left us to ourselves, John said, "You brought a baseball with you, Harry, didn't you?"

"Yes," I replied, "and a bat, too."

I hurried into the house and returned with the bat and ball. We found a place just outside the garden, under the locust trees, where we proceeded to play. John constituted himself batsman while Charlie and I were appointed pitcher and catcher respectively.

Unfortunately in knocking the ball John sent it flying among the bee-hives at the end of the garden, putting the buzzing little honey-makers into a terrible passion. We didn't dare venture among the angry hives for it; being sure that

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we'd be severely stung if we did. What were we to do? We could not play without our ball, that was certain. Maybe Silas would help us. We called the old darkey and he dropped his hoe and came grinning to hear what we wanted.

"Our baseball fell among the bee-hives there, Si," I explained, "and we were wondering if you couldn't help us to get it again without being stung."

"Shure, I kin," said Silas.

"If you get it for us," said John, "I'll give you a nickel. Here it is," pulling a five-cent piece from his pocket and showing it to the old darkey.

Without a moment's hesitation he got down on his knees and began to crawl among the hives after the ball. We drew back when we heard the angry buzzing of the bees at this unwarranted intrusion. Soon we saw that his head was covered with bees. At length he emerged with the ball which he threw to us, and began running in the direction of the pump where a tub stood half filled with water. We saw that his head and face were literally covered with bees which he was hitting at right and left without relieving the situation. When he reached the tub he plunged his head into the water as far as he could, and so

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got rid of the pests that left his face and eyes badly swollen.

"Here's your nickel," said John. "We're sorry the bees behaved so badly, Si. I hope you're not stung very much."

"Not as you mought notice it, sah," said Si, as he took the nickel and pocketed it with a grin. "I'd do ut agin for anuder nickel."

We all laughed; and John said, "I hope you'll get as much fun spending that nickel as we got seeing you earn it, Si."

"Yaas, sah; I hopes so, sah," grinned Silas, as he resumed his hoe and went chuckling away to his work again.

We found a safer place at a considerable distance from the garden and the bee-hives and continued our ball game until called to dinner.

After dinner Roy and we were seated on the porch talking over the happenings of the morning, when Mr. Babbit made his appearance with the "Brownsboro News" in his hand, exclaiming:

"He has done it!"

"Has done what, father? And whom do you mean?" asked Roy.

"Why, our Poet. He has written something about 'A Boy's Heart'; it suits you boys to a T,

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and any boy who loves the country, for that matter. I'll read it to you:”

It's out and away at break of day,
To frolic and run in the sun-sweet hay:
It's up and out with a laugh and shout—
Let the old world know that a boy's about.

It's ho for the creek that the minnows streak,
That the sunbeams dapple, the cattle seek;
For a fishing-pole and a swimming-hole,
Where a boy can loaf and chat with his soul.

It's oh to lie and look at the sky
Through the roof of the leaves that's built so high:
Where all day long the birds make song,
And everything's right and nothing wrong.

It's hey to win where the breeze blows thin,
And watch the twinkle of feather and fin:
To lie all day and dream away
The long, long hours as a boy's heart may.

It's oh to talk with the trees and walk
With the winds that whisper to flower and stalk:
And it's oh to look in the open book
Of your own boy-dreams in some leafy nook.

Away from the noise of the town, and toys,
To dream the dreams that are dreamed by boys:
To run in the heat, with sun-tanned feet,
To the music of youth in your heart's young beat.

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To splash and wade in the light and shade
Of the mile-long ripples the sunbeams braid:
In boyhood-wise to see with eyes
Of fancy hued like the butterflies.

To walk for hours and learn of flowers,
And things that haunt the woods and bowers:
To climb to a nest on a tree's top-crest,
Where a bird, like your heart, is singing its best.

To feel the rain on your face again,
Like the thirsty throats that the flowers strain:
To hear the call of the waterfall,
Like the voice of youth, a wonder-call.

And it's oh for me at last to see
The rainbow's end by the hillside tree;
On the wet hillside where the wild ferns hide,
Like a boy's bright soul to see it glide!

Then to laugh and run through shower and sun
In the irised hues that are arched and spun:
And, the rainbow's friend, to find and—spend
The bag of gold at the rainbow's end!

“How I'd like to find that bag of gold!” cried John. “I'd give old Silas another nickel, if I could. But, pshaw! There's no such thing, I know. I was at the rainbow's end once, and looked all around it for that bag of gold and what I found

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was an Indian arrow-head. I still have that arrow-head at home. It is made of gray flint, and hasn't a bit of gold in it."

"Well," said Mr. Babbit, "you should have dug there where the rainbow ended and you certainly would have found the bag of gold."

"Do you think so, Mr. Babbit?" asked John plaintively.

"That's what I have heard all my life; and there must be some truth in the report," said Mr. Babbit with decision.

"The next time I reach the end of the rainbow I'll get a spade and dig, for sure!" said John.

"Come on, Roy," said Mr. Babbit; "let's finish that field of corn before milking-time. You boys can amuse yourselves around the mill if you want to. Roy and I have corn to plow."

So we three, Charlie and John and I, started for the old mill, and spent the remainder of the day about it and its dam. John conceived the bright idea of there being, perhaps, a pot or bag of money buried somewhere in its neighborhood, or in the mill itself. He persuaded us to hunt with him.

We secured a rusty spade and pick from a dingy corner and searched the foundations of the

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mill and certain parts of the race-banks and the mill-dam as well but without success. As we found nothing—not even an arrow-head, we gave up the hunt in disgust, and solaced ourselves by going in swimming.

When we hurried to the house in answer to the bell the family was already seated at the table and the Poet was explaining where he had been and what he had been doing during the day.

“If you don’t mind, Mr. Poet,” said Mr. Babbit, “we’d be much obliged to you if you would tell us what her Ladyship, the Muse, had to say to you in the woods to-day.”

“I shall be delighted to report to you all that she had to say to me; or rather all that I was fortunate enough to jot down in my note-book. When I am done with this biscuit and honey, I shall be at your service,” said the Poet.

The biscuit soon disappeared, and the Poet, leaning back in his chair, took out his note-book and continued:

“I call this ‘Content,’ really and truly;” said he, heaving a happy sigh. “The Muse had this house and family in mind when communicating with me:”

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When I behold how some pursue
Fame, that is Care's embodiment,
Or Fortune, whose false face looks true—
An humble home with sweet Content
Is all I ask for me and you.

An humble home, where pigeons coo,
Whose path leads under breezy lines
Of frosty-berried cedars to
A gate, one mass of trumpet-vines,
Is all I ask for me and you.

A garden, which all Summer through
The roses old make redolent,
And morning-glories, gay of hue,
And tansy, with its homely scent,
Is all I ask for me and you.

An orchard, that the pippins strew,
From whose bruised gold the juices spring;
A vineyard, where the grapes hang blue,
Wine-big, and ripe for vintaging,
Is all I ask for me and you.

A lane that leads to some far view
Of forest or of fallow-land,
Run o'er of rose and meadow-rue,
Each with a bee in its hot hand,
Is all I ask for me and you.

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At morn, a pathway deep with dew,
 And birds that vary time and tune;
At eve, a sunset avenue,
 And whippoorwills that haunt the moon,
Is all I ask for me and you.

Dear Heart, with wants so small and few,
 And Faith, that's better far than gold,
A lowly friend, a child or two,
 To care for us when we are old,
Is all I ask for me and you.

“My dear Poet,” said Mr. Babbit, as we arose from the table, “you have epitomized in those lines all that goes to the making of happiness. I congratulate you.”

“I have one fault to find with it,” said Mrs. Babbit, smiling; “it isn't long enough.”

“If it were longer,” said the Poet, “it would ask for more. The desire for too many things is just what the contented life wishes to avoid.”

“Mother knows that as well as I do,” remarked Mr. Babbit. “Now shall we retire to the porch and watch the fireflies in the valley? I can't sit up late with you folks to-night. You see I have to drive to market to-morrow morning with the butter, eggs, and vegetables.”

“I think, with your permission, Mr. Babbit, I'll

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ride with you," said the Poet. "I want to see a publisher about my book."

"I thought you had found a publisher in New York or Boston," said Mr. Babbit.

"No," replied the Poet, "I have not tried to, as yet. These poems being of places and things here at home, I thought that they should be issued by a home publishing-house. All the publishers of the East seem to have a poor opinion of Nature Poetry. They don't consider it a paying proposition, as they do some of the love verses they are putting out in beautiful bindings for holiday-reading. I shall try a home-publisher first, at all events."

"You are right, sir. And I predict that you will be successful—not only in finding a publisher here at home, but in the sales of the book when it is printed," said Mr. Babbit with enthusiasm.

"Listen!" cried Charlie, "what is that?" as a long-drawn moan or wail, ending in a quivering scream arose from the woods nearby.

"A screech-owl," said Roy, laughing.

"Pshaw! I thought it was a baby lost in the woods and crying for help," said Charlie in a disgusted tone of voice.

"Let's go into the parlor," said the Poet. "I see Mary and Mrs. Babbit have finished in the

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kitchen and have lighted the lamp. As I shall not see them for some days, or weeks, I want to make the most of their company now. I have something, moreover, which I wish Charles to hear. It is about this very owlet that has disappointed him by not being one of the ‘Babes in the Woods.’ ”

When we were seated the Poet read us the following:

When dusk is drowned in drowsy dreams,
And slow the hues of sunset die;
When firefly and moth go by,
And in still streams the new moon seems
Another moon and sky:
Then from the hills there comes a cry,
The owlet’s cry:
A shivering voice that sobs and screams,
With terror screams:—
“Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?
Who rides through the dusk and dew,
With a pair of horns,
As thin as thorns,
And face a bubble-blue?—
Who, who, who!
Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?”

When night has dulled the lily’s white,
And opened wide the moonflower’s eyes;
When pale mists rise and veil the skies,

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And round the height in whispering flight
The night-wind sounds and sighs:
Then in the wood again it cries,
 The owlet cries:

A shivering voice that calls in fright,
 In maundering fright:—

“Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?

Who walks with a shuffling shoe
 ‘Mid the gusty trees,
 With a face none sees,

And a form as ghostly, too?
 Who, who, who!
Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?”

When midnight leans a listening ear

 And tinkles on her insect lutes;

When ‘mid the roots the cricket flutes,
And marsh and mere, now far, now near,

 A jack-o’-lantern foots:

 Then o’er the pool again it hoots,
 The owlet hoots:

A voice that shivers as with fear,

 That cries with fear:—

“Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?

Who creeps with his glowworm crew

 Above the mire

 With a corpse-light fire,

As only dead men do?—

 Who, who, who!

Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?”

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“That makes me shudder. It’s as scary as the cry of the owl itself!” said Charlie. “I’ll be afraid to go to bed to-night with those awful things in my mind that you put into the cry of the owl.”

“If that is the case I’ll have to rout them with something sane and more healthful,” remarked the Poet with a laugh.

“Better let them have it right away, then,” said Mr. Babbit, “as it is nearly bed-time.”

“All right, Sir Host!” replied the Poet. “I shall hesitate no longer.

“This is my ‘Witchery’:”

She walks the woods when evening falls
With spirits of the winds and leaves;
And to her side the soul she calls
Of every flower she perceives.

She walks with introspective eyes
That see not as the eyes of man,
But with the dream that in them lies,
And which no outward eyes may scan.

She sits among the sunset hills,
Or trails a silken skirt of breeze,
Then with the voice of whippoorwills
Summons the Twilight to the trees.

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Among the hollows, dim with musk,
Where wild the stream shows heels of foam.
She sows with firefly-seeds the dusk,
And leads the booming beetle home.

She blows the glowworm lamps aglare,
And hangs them by each way like eyes;
Then, 'mid the blossoms, everywhere
She rocks to sleep the butterflies.

She calls the red fox from his den,
And, hollowing to her mouth one hand,
Halloos the owlets in the glen,
And hoots awake the purple land.

The cricket knows her foot's light tread
And sings for her an elfin mass;
She puts the bumblebee to bed,
And shakes the white moth from the grass.

And to the mud-wasps, where they top
Their cells of clay, she murmurs *sleep*:
She bids the toad come forth and hop,
The snail put out its horns and creep.

She taps upon the dead tree's trunk,
And 'neath the bark the worm begins;
And where the rotted wood is sunk
A twinkling web the spider spins.

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She claps a night-cap of the dew
On every rosy clover-head;
And on the lily, pale of hue,
She slips a gown while still in bed.

With kisses cool of drowsy mist
She thrills each wildflower's heart with June;
And, whispering gold and amethyst,
Sighs legends to them of the moon.

She bids the black bat forth, to be
The courier of her darker moods;
She mounts the moon-imp, Mystery,
And speeds him wildly through the woods.

She crowds with ghosts the forest-walks;
And with the wind's dim words invokes
The spirit that forever talks
Unto the congregated oaks.

She leans above the flying stream:
Her starry gaze commands it stay:
And in its lucid deeps a dream
Takes shape and glimmers on its way.

She rests upon the lichenèd stone,
Her moonbeam hair spread bright around:
And in the darkness, one by one,
The unborn flowers break the ground.

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She lays her mouth, like some sweet word,
 Against the wild-bird's nest that swings:
And in the speckled egg, that heard,
 The young bird stirs its wings and sings.

In her all dreams find permanence:
 All mysteries that trance the soul:
And substance, that evades the sense,
 Through her wood-magic is made whole.

Oh, she is lovelier than she seems
 To any one whose soul may see:
But only they who walk with dreams
 Shall meet with her and know 'tis she.

As the Poet finished Mr. Babbit said: "I like that. It says a great deal more to the mind than to the ear or eye. I agree with the Poet; nothing more influences the soul of man in the establishment of a belief in God than the mysterious beauty of Nature."

He ceased speaking for a moment, and then continued: "After that poem I am at loss as to what scripture I should read to-night. Let us omit the reading and offer up a simple prayer instead: God bless us one and all! and with the other good things of life give us an understanding and appreciation of the beautiful things of Earth."

"Amen," said the Poet; and we all said "Amen."

IV.

THE BOOK.

Two weeks had elapsed and we had seen and heard nothing of our Poet, when one morning he surprised us at the breakfast table.

“Look who’s here!” shouted Mr. Babbit. “Come right in, stranger, and make yourself at home! I am very glad to see you again.”

“It is good to be back with one’s friends,” replied the Poet.

“Where have you been these hot weeks?” inquired Mr. Babbit. “Not in town, I hope.”

“Yes,” said the Poet. “I have been in town for a part of the time arranging for the publication of my book. I expect it to be out in the fall. I returned to Brownsboro several days ago and have been busy preparing the manuscript for the printer. I have been doing very little new writing, mostly revising; and have visited the woods once or twice only, and that in the evening when nobody was abroad.”

“What’s that bulging out of your coat-pocket? Is it your manuscript?” inquired Mr. Babbit.

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“I suppose it is,” replied the Poet. “I have to plead guilty of having brought my manuscript along, as I wish to consult you and my young friends relative to some features of rural life.”

“That’s what I call considerate kindness,” said Mr. Babbit.

“We’ll hear you read after breakfast. What have you named your book?”

“I have decided to call it ‘The Morning Road,’ ” said the Poet. “How does the title strike you?”

“Fine!” said Mr. Babbit. “It covers a broad field.”

“I’m glad you like it,” said the Poet with a smile.

After breakfast we retired to a shady place under the trees in the neighborhood of the garden, and seated, or lying, on the grass, watched him unfold his manuscript. He began his reading by saying:

“As an introduction to my volume I have written a special poem, or preliminary lines. I call it ‘Hesperian,’ because the book, my Morning Road, in very truth, is intended to take the reader back to the Golden Age, when people used to sit

The Book

around, as we are now sitting, under the trees,
and listen to readings and recitations of poetry.”’

The path that winds by wood and stream
Is not the path for me to-day;
The path I take is one of dream,
That leads me down a twilight way.

By towns, where only myths have been;
By streams, no mortal foot hath crossed;
To gardens of hesperian sheen,
By halcyon seas forever lost.

By forests, moonlight haunts alone,—
(Diana with her silvery fawn:)
By fields, wheron the stars are sown,—
(The wildflowers gathered of the Dawn.)

To orchards of eternal fruit,
That never mortal hand shall take;
Around whose central tree and root
Is coiled the never-sleeping snake.

The Dragon, lost in listening, curled
Around the trunk whose fruit is gold:
The ancient wisdom of the world
Guarding the glory never old.

The one desire, that leads me now
Beyond endeavor still to try
And reach those peaks that overbrow
The islands of the sunset sky.

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The purple crags, the rosy peaks
 Of somewhere, nowhere—where you will,—
But the one place where Beauty speaks
 With the Greek rapture on her still.

Where still she joins with old Romance
 And Myth and Legend pearl-white hands,
And leads the old immortal dance
 Of song in dim immortal lands.

“That is a bit of verse after my own heart!” declared Mr. Babbit when the Poet had concluded. “It is a gateway opening into the Garden of the Hesperides where you can hear the Daughters of the Gods dancing and singing to magic music and see the golden apples shining on the enchanted tree.”

“That’s a very pretty compliment, Mr. Babbit,” said the Poet. “And I thank you from my heart. After the introduction I will lead you a more familiar way, however, through our own beloved woods. A ‘Forest Way’ that I have frequently followed, as perhaps you have:”

I climbed a forest path and found
A dim cave in the dripping ground,
Where dwelt the spirit of cool sound,
Who wrought with crystal triangles,
And hollow foam of rippled bells,
A music of mysterious spells.

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Where Sleep her bubble-jewels spilled
Of dreams ; and Silence twilight-filled
Her emerald buckets, star-instilled,
With liquid murmurs of lost springs,
And mossy tread of woodland things,
And drip of dew that greenly clings.

Here by those servitors of Sound,
Warders of that enchanted ground,
My soul and sense were seized and bound;
And in a dungeon deep of trees
Entranced, were laid at lazy ease,
The charge of woodland mysteries.

The minions of Prince Drowsihead,
The wood-perfumes, with sleepy tread,
Tip-toed around my ferny bed :
And far-away I heard report
Of one who dimly rode to Court,
The Fairy Princess, Eve-Amort.

Her herald winds sang as she passed ;
And there her beauty stood at last
With wild gold locks, a band held fast,
Above blue eyes, as clear as spar ;
While from a curved and azure jar
She poured the white moon and a star.

“That is an original description of the close of day and the coming on of twilight and evening. You sustained your figures of speech

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throughout, my dear Poet. I imagine that these boys would find it difficult to understand some of the poetical allusions. What do you say, John?" asked Mr. Babbit.

"Nothing!" answered John. "Only I wish some one would show me that path so I could find the cave where the Poet took his nap on the ferns and woke up and saw the sunset, with the new moon and the evening star."

"I'll take you that path to-morrow, Johnny," said the Poet, "for showing me, in answer to Mr. Babbit's question, that you understood my poem.

"And near this cave there lies a 'Forest Spring,' by which I have sat and watched for hours. One day while looking into its mirror I saw, far down, something that would have startled you."

"What was it? A fish or a frog?" asked John, greatly interested.

"Neither the one nor the other," replied the Poet. "You will hardly believe me when I tell you that it was a spirit in the form of a beautiful woman."

"What!" we all exclaimed as if with one breath.

"A spirit! a beautiful woman!" said the Poet

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with an emphatic nod of his head. "In the old classic days they called her a Nymph, a creature that haunted brooks, and springs, and pools. Listen now, and I'll try to tell you all about it:"

Push back the brambles, berry-blue:
The hollowed spring is full in view:
Deep-tangled with luxuriant fern
Its rock-imbedded, crystal urn.
Not for the loneliness that keeps
The coigne wherein its silence sleeps;
Not for the butterflies that sway
Their pansy pinions all the day
Above its mirror; nor the bee,
Nor dragonfly, that, passing, see
Themselves reflected in its spar;
Not for the one white liquid star,
That twinkles in its firmament;
Nor moon-shot clouds, so slowly sent
Athwart it when the kindly night
Beads all its grasses with the light
Small jewels of the dimpled dew:
Not for the day's inverted blue,
Nor the quaint, dimly colored stones
That dance within it where it moans:
Not for all these I love to sit
In silence and to gaze in it.
But, know, a Nymph with merry eyes
Looks at me from its laughing skies;
A graceful, glimmering Nymph who plays
All the long fragrant Summer days

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With instant sights of bees and birds,
And speaks with them in water-words:
And for whose nakedness the air
Weaves moony mists, and on whose hair,
Unfilleted, the night will set
That lone star as a coronet.

“I shall, with your permission, make her acquaintance,” remarked Mr. Babbit. “She must be a fascinating creature from your description. That star on her forehead, I suppose, is a happy thought.”

“Yes,” replied the Poet, “she attires herself differently in different places. I have seen her in various forms and moods. But her attributes and characteristics are nearly always the same. Sometimes her beauty is so great that it is poignant, and pains you instead of giving you pleasure. I have a sonnet descriptive of her in her kindlier aspects; attitudes of loveliness which she assumes according to the seasons. I am quite sure you have met her among these hills, but have failed to recognize her because of her disguises.”

Here is the place where Loveliness keeps house,
Between the river and the wooded hills,
Within a valley where the Springtime spills
Her firstling flowers under blossoming boughs:
Where Summer sits braiding her warm, white brows

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With bramble-roses; and where Autumn fills
Her lap with asters; and old Winter frills
With crimson haw and hip his snowy blouse.
Here you may meet with Beauty. Here she sits
Gazing upon the moon; or, all the day,
Tuning a wood-thrush flute, remote, unseen:
Or when the storm is out 't is she who flits
From rock to rock, a form of flying spray,
Shouting, beneath the leaves' tumultuous green.

"I see, now, what you have in mind!" exclaimed Mr. Babbit. "It's Loveliness or Beauty personified, call her Nymph, Naiad or Dryad, or what you will; she's just the loveliness with which Nature lures the soul of man."

"Then again I have met her," continued the Poet, absorbed in his own remarks, "there by your fishing-hole under other conditions; and her appearance was again quite different."

"What did she look like then?" asked John, deeply interested as we all were.

"A witch," answered the Poet, looking seriously at us.

"It wouldn't do for Silas to meet with her then!" said Mr. Babbit.

"Oh, she doesn't resemble in any way the stereotyped order of witch known in slavery days, or pictured in Mother Goose. She is very beauti-

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ful, but her beauty is exercised for harm, not good, upon the mortal who may chance to meet her, particularly at night.”

There is a woodland witch who lies
With bloom-bright limbs and beam-bright eyes,
Among the waterflags that rank
The slow brook’s heron-haunted bank.
The dragonflies, in brass and blue,
Are signs she works her sorcery through;
Weird, wizard characters she weaves
Her spells with under forest leaves,—
These wait her word, like imps, upon
The gray flag-pods, their wings of lawn
And gauze; their bodies, copper-green.
While o’er the wet sand,—left between
The running water and the still,—
In pansy hues and daffodil,
The fancies that she may devise
Assume the forms of butterflies,
Rich-colored,—and ’t is she you hear,
Whose sleepy rune, hummed in the ear
Of silence, bees and beetles purr,
And the dry-droning locusts whirr;
Till, where the wood is very lone,
Vague monotone meets monotone,
And Slumber is begot and born,
A fairy child, beneath the thorn.
There is no mortal who may scorn

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The witchery she spreads around
Her dim domain, wherein is bound
The beauty of abandoned time,
As some sweet thought 'twixt rhyme and rhyme.
And through her spells you shall behold
The blue turn gray, the gray turn gold
Of sunset heaven; and the brown
Of twilight's vistas twinkled down
With fireflies; and in the gloom
Feel the cool vowels of perfume . . .
Slow-syllabled of weed and bloom.
But in the night, at languid rest,—
When like a spirit's naked breast
The moon slips from a silver mist,—
With star-bound brow, and star-wreathed wrist,
If you should see her rise and wave
You welcome—ah! what thing could save
You then? forevermore her slave!

“I for one should not object to becoming her slave!” exclaimed Mr. Babbit.

“I have been her slave for several years now,” replied the Poet. “And while my serfdom has been delightful in many ways, still, in other ways, it has been a burden. There is little satisfaction in being bound to a spirit whom you never see, or can never touch except through some aspect of Nature.”

“Here comes Mary to call us to dinner!” cried Roy, glad of the interruption.

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We arose as Mary came and told us that dinner was ready.

After we had lunched, we again gathered in our shady spot under the trees, and, making ourselves comfortable, the Poet continued in this manner:

“Here is something about the everyday things in the country-life—American, I mean—of mid-summer. You will find no classical allusions, wood-nymphs or water-nymphs in this; but just a plain old farm-picture:”

The locust gyres; the heat intensifies;
The rain-crow croaks from hot-leaved tree to tree;
The butterfly, a flame-fleck, aimlessly
Droops down the air and knows not where it flies.
Beside the stream, whose bed in places dries,
The small green heron flaps; the minnows flee;
And 'mid the blackberry-lilies wasp and bee
Drowse where the cattle pant with half-closed eyes.
The Summer-day, like some tired laborer,
Lays down her burden here and sinks to rest,
The tan of toil upon her face and hands;
She dreams, and lo, the heavens over her
Unfold her dream: Along the boundless West
Rolls gold the harvest of the sunset's lands.

“That,” said Mr. Babbit, “makes me feel hotter than I really am. The rain-crow and the

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locust intensify the heat with their song, or seem to do so."

"But listen to that!" exclaimed the Poet.
"There's a bit of Spring fluttering in the trees."

"A wood-thrush!" cried Roy. "Where did he come from this hot day?"

"His song," remarked the Poet, "has the crystal clarity of a cool water."

"It reminds me of May and a gentle shower," said Mr. Babbit.

"I like his singing better than that of any bird," the Poet remarked. "His voice, which reminds me, in some way, of the pipes of Pan, although I never heard those pipes, works wonders in my imagination. Under its influence last May I wrote the following song in those old beech woods," said he, pointing toward the west:

Bird, with the voice of gold,
Dropping wild bar on bar,
To which the flowers unfold,
Star upon gleaming star,
Here in the forest old.

Bird, with the note as clear,
Cool as the beaded dew,
To which the buds, that hear,
Open their eyes of blue,
Prick up a rosy ear.

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Shut in your house of leaves,
 Bubbles of song you blow,
Showered whence none perceives,
 Taking the wood below
Till its green bosom heaves.

Music of necromance!
 Circles of silvering sound,
Wherein the fairies dance,
 Weaving an elfin round,
Till the whole wood's a-trance.

Till, with the soul, one hears
 Footsteps of mythic things:
Fauns, with their pointed ears,
 Piping to haunted springs,
And the white Nymph that nears.

Dryads, that rustle from
 Trunks of unclosing trees,
Glimmering shapes that come
 Clothed on with bloom and breeze,
Stealthily venturous.

Spirits of light and air,
 Bodies of dawn and dusk,
Peeping from blossoms there,—
 Windows of dew and musk,—
Starry with firefly hair.

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Moth-winged and bee-like forms,
Rippling with flower-tints,
Waving their irised arms,
Weaving, of twilight glints,
Wonders and wildwood charms.

Myths of the falling foam,
Tossing their hair of spray,
Driving the minnows home,
Shepherding them the way.
Safe from the water-gnome.

Or, from the streaming stone,
Drawing with liquid strokes
Many a crystal tone,—
Music their joy evokes,
Filling the forest lone.

Art thou a voice or bird,
Lost in the world of trees?
Or but a dream that's heard
Telling of mysteries.
Saying an unknown word?

Bird, like a wisp, a gleam,
Lo, you have led me far!—
Would I were what you seem,
Or what you really are,
Bird with the voice of dream!

“That's what I have wondered over,” said Mr. Babbit, as the Poet concluded. “As Words-

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worth said of his cuckoo,—‘Shall I call thee bird,
or but a wandering voice?’ Is it a voice or a bird?
I have often heard the thrush singing, but found
it very difficult to obtain a glimpse of him in the
leaves. He seems to become intoxicated with his
song and to conceal himself in the forest to enjoy
his own transports. In one respect he is rather
selfish about his singing, that is, in trying to keep
it all to himself, or as far removed from admirers
or imitators as possible.”

We were silent for a moment, watching the Poet as he quietly turned the pages of his manuscript. Suddenly he stopped, and, looking attentively at us, exclaimed:

“I wrote that song about the thrush seated
on a majestic beech tree which the storm had
felled in the forest. Here is what I said some
time afterward about that tree:”

Nevermore at doorways that are barken
Shall the madcap wind knock and the noon-
light;
Nor the circle which thou once didst darken,
Shine with footsteps of the neighboring moon-
light,
Visitors for whom thou oft didst hearken.

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Nevermore, gallooned with cloudy laces,
Shall the Morning, like a fair freebooter,
Make thy leaves his richest treasure-places;
Nor the Sunset, like a royal suitor,
Clothe thy limbs with his imperial graces.

And no more, between the savage wonder
Of the sunset and the moon's up-coming,
Shall the storm, with boisterous hoof-beats, under
Thy dark roof dance, Faun-like, to the humming
Of the Pan-pipes of the rain and thunder.

Oft the Satyr-spirit, beauty-drunken,
Of the Spring called; and the music measure
Of thy sap made answer; and thy sunken
Veins grew vehement with youth, whose pressure
Swelled thy gnarly muscles, winter-shrunken.

And the joy, deep down in darkness rooted,
Bubbled green from all thy million oilets,
Where the spirits, rain-and-sunbeam-suited,
Of the April made their whispering toilets,
Or within thy stately shadow footed.

Oft the hours of blond Summer tinkled
At the windows of thy twigs, and found thee
Bird-blithe; or, with shapely bodies, twinkled
Lissom feet of naked flowers around thee,
Where thy mats of moss lay sunbeam-sprinkled.

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And the Autumn, with his gypsy-coated
Troop of days, beneath thy branches rested,
Swarthy-faced and dark of eye; and throated
Songs of hunting; or with red hand tested
Every nut-burr that above him floated.

Then the Winter, barren-browed, but rich in
Shaggy followers of frost and freezing,
Made the floor of thy broad boughs his kitchen,
Trapper-like, to camp in; grimly easing
Limbs snow-furred and moccasined with lichen.

Now, alas! no more do these invest thee
With the dignity of whilom gladness!
They—unto whose hearts thou hast confessed thee
Of thy dreams—now know thee not! and sadness
Sits beside thee where, forgot, dost rest thee.

Mr. Babbit said, as the Poet finished reading,
“I feel just as you feel about a tree. It seems to
me that it has sensations something akin to our
own. Trees stand as if lost in thought; thinking,
thinking, and so patient in the rain or sun or snow.
To deliberately injure or destroy one, I consider
a crime. Think of the years that go to the mak-
ing of a forest monarch! and how little we take
thought of what their destruction means!”

“If men gave more consideration to the felling
of trees,” said the Poet, “we should have fewer

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tornadoes, and fewer drouths. Forests protect man and his interests, acting as bulwarks to storms, and making reservoirs for the rain; but most men don't know this, their one thought being to get rid of the trees and plant corn and wheat in their places."

"I wonder what time it is!" said Roy, as the Poet meditatively turned the pages of his manuscript.

"Time you were going for the cows," said his father with a yawn.

"All right," said Roy as he arose.

"We'll go with you!" cried John and Charlie also rising.

And the three wended their way valley-ward. Presently we heard Roy down the road calling, "Coo-ee, coo-ee!"

"That call puts me in mind of something I once wrote about the farm. Would you care to hear it?"

"Read it to us while they're bringing home the cows. I hear the tinkle of old Bess's bell coming up through the hollow."

"Here it is," said the Poet as he settled himself luxuriously on the grass:

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The mellow smell of hollyhocks
And marigolds and pinks and phlox

Blends with the homely garden scents
Of onions, silvering into rods,
Of peppers, scarlet with their pods;

And,—rose of all the esculents,—
Of broad plebeian cabbages,
Breathing content and corpulent ease.

The buzz of wasp and fly makes hot
The spaces of the garden-plot;

And from the orchard,—where the fruit
Ripens and rounds, or, loosed with heat,
Rolls, hornet-clung, before the feet,—

One hears the veery's golden flute,
That mixes with the sleepy hum
Of bees that drowsily go and come.

The podded musk of gourd and vine
Embower a gate of roughest pine,

That leads into a wood where Day
Sits, leaning o'er a forest pool,
Watching the lilies opening cool,

And dragonflies at airy play,
While, dim and near, the Quietness
Rustles and stirs her leafy dress.

Far off a cowbell clangs awake
The Noon who slumbers in the brake:
And now a pewee, plaintively,

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Whistles the Day to sleep again:
A rainerow croaks a rune for rain,
And from the ripest apple-tree
A great red apple thuds where, slow,
The barn-cock curves his neck to crow.

Hens cluck their broods from place to place,
While clinking home, with chain and trace,
The cart-horse plods along the road
Where Afternoon sits with his dreams:
Hot fragrance of hay-making streams
Above him, and a high-heaped load
Goes creaking by and with it, sweet,
The aromatic soul of Heat.

“Coo-ee! coo-ee!” the Evenfall
Cries, and the hills repeat the call:
“Coo-ee! coo-ee!” and by the log
Labour unharnesses his plough,
While to the barn comes cow on cow:
“Coo-ee! coo-ee!”—and, with his dog,
Barefooted Boyhood down the lane
“Coo-ees” the cattle home again.

When the reading was done we heard the approaching cowbells, and the voices of the boys as they trudged along the lane. As we arose they trailed lazily into view, and old Silas emerged from the spring-house carrying a milking-pail and stool. The cows filed into the cow-yard, and

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were soon milked. We washed and made ourselves presentable for supper.

After supper we sat on the porch for a while, watching the sunset pile up clouds in the west. There was a hint of rain in the close air. Mrs. Babbit and Mary joined us after a while and the lamp being lighted we retired to the parlor. Mary opened the organ and sang a few camp-meeting songs in a clear girlish voice. After the music the Poet produced his manuscript and said:

“Here is something I feel certain that Harry and Mary won’t like.”

“Why?” I asked, surprised at such a statement.

“Because of what the flowers in Mary’s garden told me about Mary and yourself,” replied the Poet with a twinkle in his eye.

“Flowers don’t talk,” said Roy with a derisive laugh. “At any rate, I never heard them say a word in my life, and I have been among them a lot.”

“Nevertheless,” said the Poet in a very decided manner, “Mary’s flowers talk, for I heard them, one night not long ago, carrying on a conversation when she and Harry were walking in the garden. The family didn’t know I was about,

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and Mary and Harry were so interested in each other that they, of course, didn't notice my presence."

I remember the evening. It was several nights ago and Mary had taken me into the garden to show me how the little wild-bees had gone to sleep in the sunflower's discs, nestling their pollened bodies, head-foremost, in the brown calyxes. We had passed on to the giant-of-battle rose bush where I thought I saw some one sitting, and had spoken of it to Mary, but she had replied that it was only a shadow of some tree nearby.

"I do wish you would tell us what the flowers said; I am sure it must have been something lovely," said Mary.

"Quite lovely," replied the Poet. "They did not say much, but it was to the point."

Thin, chisel-fine a cricket chipped
The crystal silence into sound;
And where the branches dreamed and dripped
A katydid its dagger stripped
And on the humming darkness ground.

A bat, against the gibbous moon,
Danced imp-like with its lone delight;
The glowworm scrawled a golden rune
Upon the dark; and, emerald-strewn,
The fireflies hung with lamps the night.

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The flowers told their beads in prayer,
Dew-syllables of sighed perfume;
Or talked of two, soft-standing there,
One like a gladiole, straight and fair,
And one like some rich poppy-bloom.

The mignonette and feverfew
Laid their pale brows together: "See!"
One whispered, "did their step thrill through
Your roots?"—"Like rain. I touched the two,
And a new bud was born in me."

One rose said to another: "Whose
Is this dim music—song—that parts
My crimson petals like the dews?"—
"My blossom trembles with sweet news—
It is the love in two young hearts."

"Very pretty indeed!" said Mrs. Babbit.
"Henceforth I shall pay more attention to the
flowers, especially in the evening when Nature
seems to make them communicative."

"Well, all I have to say," remarked Mr. Bab-
bit with a wink, "is, you children will have to be
more careful of what you say when walking in
the garden hereafter, since the flowers are such
tattlers."

"Mother," suddenly exclaimed Mary, blush-
ing, and confirming, with her confusion the Poet's

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indictment, "Harry and I didn't talk of a thing that evening but the bees and the sunflowers. And you know it, too, if you were in the garden, Mr. Poet."

"Yes," answered the Poet, teasingly. "It wasn't the words you said with your lips, but the words you said with your hearts that the flowers paid attention to."

"Don't you believe him, mother!" exclaimed Mary, and she began to cry.

I was amused as were the others, but Mary took the Poet's words so seriously that finally her mother had to interfere. Shaking her finger at the Poet she said:

"You'll have to stop teasing Mary. If you don't we'll never listen to another of your poems!"

"That would never do, Mrs. Babbit, never. I take back all I said, and beg your pardon, Mary. Be a good girl now, and, come, let's be friends again." The Poet spoke with a smile, and rising, extended his hand which Mary took soberly.

"Now since that's settled," said Mr. Babbit, "we'll proceed with the evening's entertainment."

"I do believe it's beginning to rain," interrupted Mrs. Babbit stepping to the window and looking out into the night.

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A gentle pattering of drops was heard on the shrubs and vines outside the house, becoming louder every moment, until it settled down to a deliberate and steady pouring sound.

“An all-night rain,” remarked Mr. Babbit, rising and gazing out into the darkness, which was unrelieved by any flicker of lightning or sound of thunder.

“This would be a good time for the reading of another rain-rhyme; that is, if you have one concealed somewhere in your manuscript,” said Mr. Babbit as he seated himself near the Poet.

“Oh, I have one or two you have never suspected me of having,” answered the Poet. “One that will suit such a rain as this exactly. Only it is a day-rain and not a night-rain. If you are willing to overlook the difference I’ll read it to you. I wrote it last Summer, under a beech tree in your woods, Mr. Babbit, to the music of quiet showers:”

When on the leaves the rain persists,
And every gust brings showers down;
When copse and woodland smoke with mists,
I take the old road out of town
Into the hills through which it twists.

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I find the vale where catnip grows,
Where boneset blooms, with moisture bowed;
The vale through which the red creek flows,
Turbid with hill-washed clay, and loud
As some wild horn a huntsman blows.

Around the root the beetle glides,
A burnished beryl; and the ant,
Large, agate-red, a garnet, slides
Beneath the rock; and every plant
Is roof for some frail thing that hides.

Like knots against the trunks of trees
The lichen-colored moths are pressed;
And, wedged in hollow blooms, the bees
Hang pollen-clotted; in its nest
The wasp has crawled and lies at ease.

The locust harsh, that sharply saws
The silence of the Summer noon;
The katydid, that thinly draws
Its fine file o'er the bars of moon;
And grasshopper that fills each pause.

The mantis, long-clawed, furtive, lean—
Fierce feline of the insect hordes—
And dragonfly, gauze-winged and green,
Beneath the wild-grape's leaves and gourd's,
Have housed themselves and rest unseen.

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The butterfly and forest-bird
Are huddled on the same gnarled bough,
From which, like some rain-voweled word
That dampness hoarsely utters now,
The tree-toad's guttural voice is heard.

I crouch and listen; and again
The woods are filled with phantom forms—
With shapes, grotesque in cloudy train,
That rise and reach to me cool arms
Of mist; dim, wandering wraiths of rain.

I see them come; fantastic, fair;
Chill, mushroom-colored. Sky and earth
Grow ghostly with their floating hair
And trailing limbs, that have their birth
In wetness—fungi of the air.

O wraiths of rain! O ghosts of mist!
Still fold me, hold me, and pursue!
Still let my lips by yours be kissed!
Still draw me with your hands of dew
Unto the tryst, the dripping tryst.

“It’s clear to me that you are as much a lover of the Summer-rain as I am,” said Mr. Babbit. “I could close my eyes while you were reading and see the dripping woods and the mists flying before the winds. To be able to transmit impressions as you do, Mr. Poet, is a great gift.”

“It is nearly time for bed,” said Mrs. Babbit,

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"the sound of the rain outside has made me a little drowsy. I think we had better have prayers, father."

"That we shall, mother, as soon as the Poet has read us his epilogue, which I happened to see as he turned the leaves of his manuscript."

"I shall be glad to accommodate you, Mr. Babbit," replied the Poet. "This, in a way, summarizes all that I have read to you during the past few weeks:"

There is a poetry that speaks
Through common things: the grasshopper,
That in the hot weeds creaks and creaks,
Says all of Summer to my ear;
And in the cricket's cry I hear
The fireside speak, and feel the frost
Work mysteries of silver near
On country casements, while, deep lost
In snow, the gatepost seems a sheeted ghost.

And other things give rare delight;
The guttural harps the green-frogs tune,
Those minstrels of the falling night,
That hail the sickle of the moon
From grassy pools that glass her lune;
Or—all of August in its loud
Dry cry—the locust's call at noon,
That emphasizes heat, no cloud
Of lazy white makes less with its cool shroud.

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The rain—whose mist obscures the moon,
That great white eyeball of the Night—
Makes music for me; to its tune
I hear the flowers unfolding white,
The mushrooms growing, and the slight
Green sound of grass that dances near;
The melon ripening with delight;
And in the orchard, soft and clear,
The apple redly rounding out its sphere.

The grigs make music as of old,
To which the fairies whirl and shine
Within the moonlight's prodigal gold,
On woodways wild with many a vine.
When all the wilderness with wine
Of stars is dazed, I hear it say—
“Is God restricted to confine
His wonders solely to the day,
That yields the abstract tangible to clay?”

And to my ear the wind of Morn—
When on her ruby forehead far
Burns one big star—lifts a vast horn
Of wonder where all murmurs are;
In which I hear the waters war;
The torrent and the blue abyss,
And pines—that terrace bar on bar
The mountain-side—as lovers kiss,
And whisper words where all that's grandeur is.

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The jutting crags—dark, iron-veined
With ore—the peaks, where eagles scream,
That pour their cataracts, rainbow-stained,
Like hair, in many a mountain stream,
Can lift my soul beyond the dream
Of all religions; make me scan
No mere external or extreme,
But inward pierce the outward plan
And see that rocks have souls as well as Man.

“That, in a way, sums up your creed, which is Nature,” said Mr. Babbit. “You seem to me at times to be a pagan, a Pantheist. At other times you preach as good a sermon as an orthodox minister.

“Now let us hear something from the Bible; then to bed. To-morrow will be another day. Life is not all poetry you know. The greater part of it is made up of prose, dry prose, that takes the form of work.”

“Wait a minute, boys!” exclaimed the Poet as we were about to ascend the stairway. “Mr. Babbit’s remark about life reminds me of some verses I always repeat to myself when I feel discouraged and despondent over any work I have

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in hand. I shall keep you but a moment. They may be useful to you in a practical way : ”

When things go wrong, as they often will,
And it’s hard to understand,
Just whistle a song, as you face the mill,
And take your work in hand,
And do your best, however men sneer,
And ’t will all come right, somehow, my dear,
'T will all come right somehow.

Stick to the work that you have to do,
And whatever it is, don’t mind;
Just whistle a song of dreams-come-true,
And in the end you’ll find,
A word will help and a smile will cheer
However the work may go, my dear,
However the work may go.

“That’s all. Good night, boys, and pleasant dreams to you.”

“Good night,” we chorused. And, mounting the stairs, were soon in our beds and fast asleep.

V.

THE NOTE-BOOK.

It was getting on into August and our Poet-friend had left us to take up his abode in Brownsboro with the editor of the "Brownsboro News," where, aside from light editorial duties, he worked at correcting the proofs of his forthcoming volume of poems.

Mr. Babbit and Roy were busy with a number of things about the farm and we three, John, Charlie and I, were left to shift for ourselves.

We haunted the old creek, swimming and fishing, or just idling along its heron-waded banks, following fancies that flitted around us like the dragonflies, that flashed hither and thither, weaving, as it were, a web of green and bronze and blue.

One day we invaded the old mill with a purpose, and made the wormeaten and dusty rafters ring with sounds of battle. We were pioneers of early Kentucky, resisting the attack of imaginary savages by whom we pretended we were surrounded.

The forest around our block-house and palisade swarmed with the painted demons. They were

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shooting blazing arrows at our palisade and fort with the intention of burning us out, like so many rats.

The attack became so warm at last that there was nothing left for us to do but to swing wide the log-gate of the fort and make a fighting effort to get away. With a wild whoop we finally made our exit, startling Mr. Babbit, who dropped his scythe on the brow of the hill, and stood a moment to watch us frantically charging into the stream and over it into the woods.

Suddenly I found myself alone in the deepest part of the forest hiding behind a fallen tree on the banks of the creek.

Cautiously raising myself to peer for the unseen foe, my hand came in contact with a leather-bound book that had slipped partially under the log behind which I was hiding. Here was treasure-trove for the decamping pioneer and his companions in adversity. A purse, probably dropped by one of the "Shawnee tribe" in their attack upon our block-house. It, assuredly, contained a round sum in gold or paper-money, with which, naturally, all Indians provide themselves when starting on a war expedition.

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Then I came to my senses; examined the book more closely and discovered that it was not a purse, but a note-book, containing a great deal of writing in a rather scrawly hand. Some of the notes I observed were in verse, and others in prose.

I sat down on the log and, oblivious of the shoutings of the other pioneers and Indians in the forest, who were still unable to locate me, proceeded to look into the book haphazard. The first passage that caught my eye was the following:

“Poetry is the rhythmical expression of the relation of the ideal, which is the beautiful, to the actual. And here in the April woods what poetry addresses me in voices of the wind! What does it say, rushing and roaring by? Tossing and tumbling, until distracted, the heads of the towering trees, within their fibrous hearts accompanied by the responding timbre of a mighty music. Voices of jubilation, of acclaim, epic, elemental, shouting their message over the barriers of the world, bidding it prepare itself for the advent of Loveliness; to doff its ashen-colored garb of penitence and don rejoicing vestments of azure and gold. Shawms, cymbals and sackbuts unite their voices

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in one sound, loud, imperious, sonorous as some million-stringed instrument, to which the forests yield themselves, rocking to and fro, like wild fanatics filled with the frenzy of some mad god whose rites they celebrate, Corybantic, the sere leaves of last year whirling and swirling around them like rent and riven raiment.

“How much happier are the little things, the lowly objects of life! How much more secure from the buffetings of Fate than the mighty, the aspiring! This wildflower, for instance; slight, unassuming, and safe; entirely undisturbed, fluttering delicately and tranquilly at the foot of this huge oak that the same wind, which merely bowed the bluet’s head, a moment ago overthrew.”

“I heard the trees in the silence of the Spring night whispering, murmuring among themselves; gossiping of the radiant garments, bud and blossom and leaf, which they were soon to put on. And then I heard them quietly laughing—as old people might, telling quaint stories of their little ones—and speaking gently, crooningly to the tiny wild-flowers nestling at their feet; flowers which the singing sap in their old hearts and roots had awakened, ere the rain and wind had called to

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them and the sunbeam had pointed them a place to rise within; blossoms that even now were gazing wonderingly around them in admiration of their own beauty, or at the stars in the branches of the trees as listening children might at the eyes of their loving parents telling them legends and tales of fairy.”

“Apple blossoms and bees; pelting petals; honeyed hummings. What glory! What memorable music! What beauty redolent of immortal memories! A mountain of blooms, large and white, delicately tinged with pink, with occasional clusters of rosy, puckered buds, waving in and perfuming the balmy wind of April. How this old tree, with its million blossoms and its murmuring bees, brings back vividly the memory of my boyhood! Every falling petal, every bee-murmur is fraught with the fragrance and music of remembered happiness. And now, drowned in its deeps of blossoming and exultant snow, a catbird goes mad with joy—or is it the voice of my lost dreams singing to me in words that my soul alone can understand? And there where—whispers of pearl, little silvery sighs of happiness breathed by the pure lips of Spring—the dog’s-tooth violets

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blur gray the creek banks, I seem to see a presence passing, dimly, a bright shadow with windflowers in its hair. The materialized memory of a Spring long gone; a Spring of my earliest youth; with cheeks and mouth a briar-rose red, her eyes a pansy-violet azure, singing a song of home.

“Or there, a-sway on a carpet of celandine gold and bluebell azure, now with a ‘wick, wick, wick,’ of a flicker-fiddle; now with a ‘cheer, cheer, cheer,’ of a redbird-reed, I seem to see and hear her, that long-lost Spring, playing an air to which the chipmunks dance, the little ground-squirrels, their blood a-beat with the intoxication of Springtime.

“She is the same as she was when, with whippoorwill words, she lured and led my boyhood into her twilight fastnesses at dewy dusk; her forests filled with fairy fancies; to a sequestered and vine-embowered spot where the first May-apples unfolded their miniature moons under the crescent of Spring; and amid whose parasols and blossoms she seated me in the whippoorwill-haunted hush, and, to the music of the crickets, told me wonder stories, elfin tales, my heart shall never forget.”

“A vagabond foot and a vagabond road,
And the love in our hearts our only load.

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An easy foot in an easy shoe,
And who is it cares where the road leads to?

An old plank gate at a lane's green end,
And who is it cares where the lane may wend?

A bowl of milk and a bit of bread—
Who richer fares or is better fed?

A crust, a spring, and a blackberry—
And who is it sups as well as we?

The night, the stars, and a pillow of hay—
Whose bed is sweeter than this, I say?

Whose dreams are deeper? Whose sleep as
pure?

The heart that's heavy finds here its cure."

Here I skipped a few pages that exposure to the weather of several nights and days had obliterated or made undecipherable. Only fragments here and there was I able to make out. The following are a few:

"The milkweeds nod their Rip-Van-Winkle heads
When Autumn blows; and in the snoring flue
The chill wind sleeps. All night it seems to me
A goblin gnome, a Lob-Lie-By-the-Fire,
Sits humped upon the hob, whining with cold,
Or whistling to the flame to keep him warm."

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“The pure precision of a star, a flower,
The punctuality of their return
And order of their coming, fill my soul
With such astonishment as mortals feel
At Bible beauties that no man explains.”

“I unlabyrinthed to-day a little worm no larger than a pin’s head, that had caused a ragweed’s stem to swell and swell; eating its larval way into the heart of the weed:

“That little worm shall become a fly,
And sing and sting ‘neath the Summer sky;
Or a gnat, like that which grows in the gall
High on the oak leaf there—a ball
That the elves shall loosen and toss over all
Merrily under the next new moon;
When ’t will grow itself wings and a sting and a
tune,
Stinging and singing its way into June.”

“Spring is late this year; it is now March the 12th, and hardly a bud or blossom is to be seen anywhere in field or forest; not a wildflower, harbinger-of-spring, spring-beauty, or anemone. All is still sere and sad in the bare brown of the windy woods. Not even a violet to push aside the dead leaves and open its baby eyes to the angry smile of the sunlight. Yet

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Spring's presence—or is it her approach?—is evidenced by the warm, wet smell of turf and loam and leaf—the aroma that haunts her gown's green hem, brushing here and there the edges of the woods; and by the sunlight basking white on the hilltops—the slow silver of her delaying feet.

“Still are the forests barren of all buds,
And all the woods of wildflowers. But, behold,
Within a week, or less, the invading hosts,
Myriad and many as the stars of heaven,
Shall utterly invade these woodland ways;
When every foot of soil shall lift and boast
Its bud or blossom or balsam-beakéd leaf,
Bragging of beauty to the passer-by,
Beggared and bankrupt of all words of praise.”

“Placid and pure and clean the wild-phlox blooms
Make glad the hillside and deep-wooded banks
Of wandering creeks. Beneath the old, gray
beech
The May-apples, in myriad colonies,
Advance-guards of the wildflowers' following
hosts,
Lift up their green-and-umber tents of leaves,
Each unrolled tent tipped with its furled-up
flag,
Its bean-like bud, a knob of delicate green,
Wherein the milk-white—blazoned deep with
gold—

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Of its broad bloom, its ensign's packed away,
While at the wood's edge, at the turn o' the lane,
A clear and chilly crimson in its keys,
Its million blooms, the maple fairly glows,
Making a crystal blur of rosy gloom;
Wherein the bluebird, like a sapphire closed
In an enormous ruby, sits and sings;
Upon his back and on his wayward wings
The lapis lazuli o' the April sky.”

“It is not very frequently that we find the Indian-pipe in this locality. But to-day I came upon it while walking along an abandoned wood-road and admiring the various colored fungi that dotted the forest and exuded from the boles and stumps of trees; such as the Cinnabar Fungus and the Sulphury Polypous, like an enormous yellow ruff. Among the many mushrooms I recognized the poisonous but beautiful Fly Aminita poised on its slender stem, its umbrella top a lemon yellow patched here and there with delicate scales of white; the edible Chantarelle, of a uniform yolk-yellow; the Green Russula and the Masked Tricholoma, pearly gray or brown, both of them snail-eaten and therefore esculents. In fact the chill mists and dews of late Summer seemed to have summoned from the earth all the grotesque forms that fancy dreams of, and scattered them

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among the drowsy trees. Among them, solitary as a spirit among imps and gnomes, delicate, transparent, as it were carved out of virgin alabaster, the Ghost-flower, or Indian-pipe, lifted its fragile stem, its flower-head waxen-white, bent as if in meditation or grief. It seemed to me the melancholy phantom of some sad wildflower, returned to earth, to haunt the spot in which it had once bloomed and to muse upon its past loveliness and happiness there.

“The place was full of a pallid, a shadowy beauty; mossy and dark, and silent except for the veery’s occasional note—remote and elusive as a pipe blown by a young Faun in the green intricacies of the forest—and the scarcely audible murmur of a stream, trickling thinly, as if afraid of its own sound, down shadowy rocks; dimly dripping, and under a bank brambled and spired with the tall, pink-flowered stalks of the horse-mint, where the sunlight faintly filtered through the thickly matted leaves. It was a place for wild-wood ghosts and dreams, both of which I found, hidden from the eyes of men.”

“How Nature protects her insects, her beetles and butterflies, to say nothing of her birds! Paint-

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ing their wings and bodies with hues scarcely distinguishable from the earth, the rock, or the bark which they frequent or inhabit. This butterfly, for instance, softly opening and closing its wings on the gray trunk of an old oak. When closed, the protective coloring of the underside of its wings so confuses the eye that the creature is not detachable in color from the tree to which it clings, being dyed a soft, mottled gray, like that of the lichen that overspreads and spots the trunk. When open—what a revelation of dyes! It is as if it had doffed a lenten habit for an Easter gown; had unfolded a sober cloak to astonish us with the richness of its lining, its under glow of velvet and vair, revelations of ruddy seal and dim ermine; its tunic and mantle furry and downy, the color of rich old port wine, edged irregularly with a dim, soft gray, a lichen-white, sprinkled with minute specks of dull gold and marked at regular intervals with orbs or ovals of shadowy blue.

“I have stood for half an hour contemplating it, absorbed by its beauty; watching it slowly and gracefully opening and closing its wings. What a wonderful piece of workmanship! And to think that this was once a worm! indescribably hairy; hideous; crawling and gnawing its way

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through life! To what end? To put to scorn the beauty wrought of the labored art of man!—What a jewel! A masterpiece! Winged and living for the Spirit of Autumn to wear in her Romany hair or at her gipsy throat as she takes her path through the crimsoning woodlands to tryst with the quiet Spirit of Indian Summer.”

Here I was rudely interrupted by an invasion of boisterous Indians who had stolen upon me and taken me unawares. Charlie, followed by John, personifying savages, burst through the bushes and made me prisoner. The note-book was confiscated as spoil of battle and I was led away, protesting vigorously.

“Let’s see what Harry is so interested in,” said John, when we were safe inside the mill and seated on the empty bin.

Then, turning the pages of the book, he exclaimed, “My goodness! Harry has turned poet, too! Look here, Charlie, what stuff he’s been writing, and we never knew it. I’ll have to show this to Mr. Babbit.”

“You Silly!” I exclaimed, “that’s not my book. It’s one I found in the woods, there where you captured me. Give it back now; the game is over, and I want my book. I found it.”

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Just then the doorway was darkened by a shadow, and Mr. Babbit followed close on its heels.

"What are you boys quarreling about anyway? You've been making more than your usual amount of noise. No room left for other folks, like myself, I suppose?" he asked as he entered and seated himself with us.

"John's taken my note-book—or rather the note-book I found in the woods—and I want him to give it back to me," I shouted.

"Yes," John gibed in, "he's turned poet, too, Mr. Babbit. We found him there on a log in the woods reading something he had written in this book—a lot of stuff, prose and poetry. Just look at it; it'd make a pig laugh."

With that he handed the note-book to Mr. Babbit, who took it with a smile and a look of surprise on his face.

"It's not mine," I said, sullenly; "I mean the writing. But the book is. I found it. I wish the things written in it *were* mine. But they're somebody else's."

"My dear boy, thank you. They're mine. Thank you for finding my note-book also. I couldn't imagine what had become of it. You see I keep it a secret—my trying to write—and had I

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not lost my note-book nobody would ever have suspected me of writing, or been the wiser for it."

"But poetry, like murder, will out. Won't it, Mr. Babbit?" asked John with a grin.

"I'm afraid so, Johnny, my boy," replied Mr. Babbit with a sigh.

"Let's hear some of your verses, Mr. Babbit," said Charlie. "It's not fair to us for Harry alone to know them."

"You want to see if I can write verses that compare favorably with our friend's, the Brownsboro Poet's? eh, you Indians!" asked the farmer with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Yes, sir!" we three exclaimed with one voice.

"Well, then, since you will have it, let the consequences be on your own heads. Don't say that I forced you to hear them, if anyone ever asks you."

He took the note-book, opened it here and there and glanced through it, clearing his throat, in a sort of embarrassed manner, and proceeded to read an irregular poem which he called "The Wood Thrush":

The liquid note of the thrush—what words can
describe it?

Above me now I hear it, dropping its globed
harmony,

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Golden-bubbled, crystalline clear, indescribably deep.

Questioningly, answeringly its music falls,
Notes of antiphonal gold,
Full of youth, full of joy ;
A tree-spirit, seemingly,
Voicing the innocence, the exuberance, the beauty
of invisible,

Inviolable things ; myths, that populate
The world of the woods and waters.

Pensively, hopefully now it pleads,
Pleads for the dreams that haunt the hearts of the
trees,

The soul of the woodland—

Dreams that it sees and knows.

And now for me its music, too, takes form,
Visible, material form ;

And I seem to see—

A presence, young with the youth that never ages,
A Faun, a Spirit, slender and naked as Spring,
Deep in the forest, approaching and now re-
treating,

Blowing a flute of flowers ;

Gleaming, vanishing far in the verdurous glooms :

A Spirit, happy with all that is happy,
Communicated joy of all that is beauty,

The wild, green beauty it drew from the breast of
its mother,

Its beautiful mother, Nature ;

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A phantom supernal in loveliness, responsive and tender,
Diaphanous, hyaline, translucently green and golden,
Golden and green like the sound of a thrush's fluting;
A form of light like that which shimmers and shadows
Under the day-deep boughs of the myriad beeches;
Flitting, wavering now like a joy that dances,
Silent, alone in the heart of the ancient forest,
Shimmering, glimmering here like the ray that stars the ripples,
Sun-speared, flashing and fading on woodland cascades,
Falling, calling, foamy-lipped, like a Naiad,
Lost in the leaves, the remotest deeps of the forest.

Like the rain that tips the point of a poplar leaf,
Trembling, a liquid star, to its twinkling fall,
There it glances and glints, tinkling with crystal
the silence;

There it hazes like heat that haunts the Summer meadows,
To whose kisses the wildflowers open their wondering and fragrant eyes;

A glimmering form it leads me, musical ever of motion,
From wildwood place to place,
Retreating, advancing, luring from vista to vista,

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Far and far in the forest, the haunted deeps of the forest,
To charm me there, perhaps, at last,
At last with some lone, long and lovelier note,
Ringing as gold
And deeper in magic than the myths of old.

“That’s what I call first-class!” said John. “I can see that Faun, or whatever you call him, dancing there in the woods with a pair of Pan’s pipes in his hands.”

“And the sunlight and shadow checkering his body,” I added.

“Good boys!” exclaimed Mr. Babbit. “That’s not much of a poem so far as metre and rhyme go, and I am afraid that our friend, the Brownsboro Poet, would reject it after a first reading.”

“But it gives us a picture just as good as any he has given us,” said Charlie, with an emphatic gesture.

“Do you boys want to hear another? You’ve been such lenient critics of this first one, I thought I’d try you with a second,” said Mr. Babbit, turning a page or two.

“Let’s have it,” said John, speaking for us all.

“Right!” replied Mr. Babbit. “Here goes. I call this ‘Catkins,’ that is, you know, in other words, Pussy-Willows:”

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I.

Misty are the far-off hills
And misty are the near;
Purple hazes dimly lie
Veiling hill and field and sky,
Marshes where the hylas cry,
Like a myriad bills,
Piping “Spring is here!”

II.

A redbird flies,
Then drops and cries
And sings to his mate,
“She is late! she is late!
How long, how long must the wood-
land wait
For its emerald plumes
And its jeweled blooms?
She is late! she is late!”

III.

Along the stream,
A cloudy gleam,
The pussy-willows, tufted white,
Make of each tree a mighty light;
Pearl and silver and glimmering gray

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They tassel the boughs of the willow-way;
And as they swing they seem to say,
With mouths of bloom
And warm perfume:

IV.

“Awake! awake!
For young Spring’s sake,
O little brown bees, in hive and brake!
Awake! awake!
For sweet Spring’s sake,
O butterflies, whose wild wings ache
With colors rare
As flowers wear!
And hither, hither,
Before we wither!
Oh, come to us,
All amorous,
With honey in our mouths to buss.

V.

“Hearken! hearken!
Last night we heard
A wondrous word;
When dusk did darken
The rain and the wind sat in these
boughs,
As in a great and shadowy house.

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At first we deemed
We only dreamed,
And then it seemed
We heard them whisper of things to be,
The wind and rain in the willow-tree.
A sweet, delicious conspiracy,
To take the world with witchery.

VI.

“They talked of the fairy brotherhoods
Of blooms and blossoms and leaves
and buds?
That ambushed under the winter mold
And under the bark of the forest old;
And they took our breath
With the shibboleth,
The secret word that conquers death,
That word of life, like a caress;
The wondrous word
Which then we heard,
That bids life rise
Beneath the skies;
Arise and fill
Far wood and hill
With myriad hosts of loveliness,
Invading Beauty, that none can guess.

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VII.

“Then in our ears,
Our woolly ears,
Our little ears of willow-bloom,
Like wild perfume
We seemed to hear dim woodland-
cheers
Of hosts of flowers,
That soon would run
Through fields and bowers,
And to the sun
Fling high their banners of blue and
gold,
And storm the ways of the wood-
land old.

VIII.

“Awake! awake!
For young Spring’s sake,
O hylas sleeping in marsh and lake!
Tune your thin pipes and play, play,
play!
Tune, tune your reeds in ooze and clay,
And pipe and sing
Till everything
Knows, gladly knows—

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Sowing the rose,
The lily and rose—
With her breast blown bare
And the wind in her hair,
And the birds around her everywhere,
The Spring, the Spring,
The young witch Spring,
With love and laughter, and rain and
 ray,
Comes swiftly, wildly up this way.”

“That is as good as any lyric our Brownsboro Poet has given us!” I remarked as Mr. Babbit finished reading.

“That’s high praise, Harry,” said Mr. Babbit, “and I appreciate it. You are too good, my boy. If I thought as you think I’d write a book, too, and publish it in competition with the Poet.”

Mr. Babbit went on turning the pages of his note-book, reading here and there to himself as he did so, while we waited for him to continue with his talk. Presently he said:

“Here’s something in regular metre and rhyme, the last in my book, and written the very day, I think, I lost it. It’s about Dragon Flies. Of course you know the dragonfly, and how at first it is a water-worm, and crawls up out of

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the water incased in a capsule-like shell as the locust is, and issues therefrom a radiant and winged insect, worthy to serve as a symbol of immortality. Let me read this to you and then you may go home and I'll worry you no more:"

You, who put off the water-worm, to rise,
Re-born with wings; who change, without ado,
Your larval bodies to invade our skies,
What Merlin magic disenchanted you,
And made you beautiful for mortal eyes?

Shuttles of Summer, where the lilies sway
Their languid leaves and sleepy pods and flowers,
Weaving your colored streaks into the day,
Knitting with light the tapestry of hours,
You come and go in needle-like array.

Now on a blade of grass, or pod, as still
As some thin shred of heaven, motionless,
A point, an azure thread, you poise, until
You seem a figment Summer would express,
But fails through utter indolence of will.

Then suddenly, as if the air had news,
And flashed intelligence of fairy things,
You vibrate into motion, instant hues,
Searching the sunlight with diaphanous wings,
Gathering together many filmy clues.

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Clues, that the subject mind, in part, divines,
Invisible but evidenced through these—
The mote, that goldens down the sun's long lines,
The web, that trails its silver to the breeze,
And the slow musk some fragile flower untwines.

Could we but follow! and the threads unwind,
Haply, through them again we might perceive
That land of Faëry, youth left far behind,
Lost in the wonder-world of Make-Believe,
Where Childhood dwells and Happiness of Mind.

And, undelayed, far, far beyond this field
And quiet water, on the dream-road trail,
Come on that realm of fancy, soul-concealed,
Where we should find, as in the fairytale,
The cap through which all elfland is revealed.

"There are your 'clues'!" John exclaimed as Mr. Babbit finished, pointing to a number of beautiful dragonflies flitting about some blackberry-lily stalks. "They do resemble colored threads, don't they, Harry?" said he, looking eagerly at me. I laughed and replied:

"You're getting to be as enthusiastic as I am about that kind of writing, Johnnie. I never knew it was in you. But I'd like to find that cap about which Mr. Babbit writes, the wearing of which reveals Fairyland to the lucky owner."

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"I've heard of such caps," said Mr. Babbit, "but never found one."

"I'd go right off to Fairyland if I found one," said Charlie, laughing.

Just then we heard the bell ringing and Mr. Babbit arose, saying:

"Why, it's supper-time! I had no idea it was so late. Moreover, it's going to rain, I think, from the looks of those clouds gathering in the west. We'd better be going, boys."

We were soon at the house and seated at the table, and Mr. Babbit was telling his wife of my find in the woods, exhibiting it with satisfaction.

"And think of it! for a whole week it lay there in the woods, by that old log, and if it hadn't been for these Indians it never would have been found!"

"Yes," remarked Mrs. Babbit, with a smile, "Indians, as I have always said, when they are well-disposed as ours are, serve some useful purpose in life after all, even if it is only as scouts to discover something that has been lost."

With that we adjourned to the parlor.

The clouds we had observed massing in the west had by now blotted the sunset, and a loud peal of thunder announced the storm that was

The Note-Book

about to break. It had been very hot and dry for over a week and we were glad to hear the rain. The lamp was lighted and we seated ourselves around it while Mr. Babbit continued to turn the pages of his note-book. Suddenly a smile illuminated his face and he said:

“That Brownsboro Poet’s not the only one who can write about thunder-storms. I see, by this book, that I have attempted it also. Just listen to this. It’s not bad. I am surprised that it’s so good.”

It seemed the listening forest held its breath
Before some vague and unapparent form
Of fear, approaching with the wings of death,
On the impending storm.

Above the hills, big, bellying clouds loomed, black
And ominous, yet silent as the blue
That pools calm heights of heaven, deepening back
’Twixt clouds of snowdrift hue.

Then instantly, as when a multitude
Shouts riot and war through some tumultuous
town,
Innumerable voices filled the wood
As wild the wind swept down.

The Poet and Nature

And, fierce and few, as when a strong man weeps,
Great rain-drops dashed the dust; and, over-head,
Ponderous and vast down the prodigious deeps,
Boomed slow the thunder's tread.

And, swift and furious, as when giants fence,
The lightning swords of tempest went insane;
Then far and near sonorous earth grew dense
With long, sweet sweep of rain.

“Listen!” whispered John, as Mr. Babbit concluded. And lifting a hushing finger he stepped to the window and leaned out into the fresh, fragrant-smelling night, cool with rain. “What’s that? It sounds like a tiny bell, a fairy bell of crystal.”

“Oh, I know!” exclaimed Mary, rising and going to the window.

“Well, what is it?” asked Roy, with a knowing smile. “A Jap would know. They put them in little wooden cages and keep them prisoners just for that sound they make.”

“It isn’t a bird?” said John, with an incredulous look at Roy.

“No,” chimed in Mrs. Babbit, with a nod to Mary. “Tell him what it is.”

“It’s a cricket,” said Mary. “What they

The Note-Book

call a leaf-cricket, or climbing-cricket. It is of a delicate, pale green and looks like a fairy, with long shell-shaped wings, gauzy and transparent in the moonlight."

"Gee! they must be pretty," said John. "I'd like to see one."

"I'll show you one some time when the moon's up," said Roy.

"It looks like a fairy, or what I imagine fairies look like," Mary continued, a little excited over her description of the cricket and what she had learned through close observation. "Its wings, when it makes that sound, which is so-so-so—"

"Pensive or plaintive," said Mrs. Babbit, giving her the word.

"Or sad and melancholy, I'd say," said Mr. Babbit, intent upon his note-book; "not at all like the cheerful little haunter of the hearth, in his black swallow-tail coat."

"Its wings," continued Mary, "are held straight up in the air and moved rapidly when they make that sound. I've seen them when they were—they were—"

"Vibrating them," said Mrs. Babbit.

"At right angles to the back that serves as a sounding board," said Mr. Babbit, with the satis-

The Poet and Nature

fied expression of the question's being settled at last. "That creates the bell-like note of a horn of Elfland faintly blowing, as Tennyson says.

"Now, children, I have found something that suits the case in hand. Here it is, 'The Climbing Cricket,' let me read it with the insect accompaniment outside in the bushes:'"

The Summer hears you where she swings
Among her poppy-pods and dreams,
While overhead the redbird sings,

The blue-jay screams.

She hears you by the garden fence,
A twilight sound, that takes the sense
With drowsy indolence.

Deep in the meditating wood
Where August sits with sultry eyes,
Thinking of leaves and solitude,

And lazy skies,

One listens, searching grass and ground
For your cool crystal of green sound,
That glints around and round.

And on the hills, when sunset glows,
Red as the rose that tints a shell
Of azure pearl, your music grows

A fairy spell;

And at its sound Day lays her down
To rest, in gold and russet gown,
Crowned with her starry crown.

The Note-Book

And lying there, as in a dream,
Hearing your bell-note, at a glance
She seems to see, where moonbeams gleam,

The elfins dance;
And, looking nearer, lo, she sees
Your airy wings pulse in the breeze,
Among the weeds and trees.

And on a fingertip of dew
She lifts you, singing, to the moon;
And ghosts of wonders, Boyhood knew,

To your frail tune,
Rise from their graves, like mists, and stand
Around you, hand in tiny hand,
Beckoning to Elfinland.

“That describes it exactly, father,” said Mary, listening with glowing eyes and cheeks while her father read.

“Thank you, children,” said Mr. Babbit, with satisfaction in his eyes; “I think I got the insect into those lines correctly. And they say they can’t get realism into poetry without ruining it. All nonsense. That’s realism, I think, and it’s poetry too.”

“Yes it is,” I said. “It’d be hard to better that line which describes its music as being a ‘cool crystal of green sound’; it’s original, I am sure, Mr. Babbit.”

The Poet and Nature

"Glad you think so, Harry, my boy. I'll have to read some of these things to the Poet when he visits us again."

And, closing the note-book, he took up the Bible and made his selection for the evening's reading.

We went to our rooms and beds afterward and slept to the dripping music of the rain.

The following morning we received a letter from home. It was to the effect that mother and father had decided to take a vacation themselves and wanted us to accompany them. Our vacation, so far as the Babbits were concerned, was over. We were to visit the North Shore and old ocean for the remainder of the month. We were very happy over this change of scene, but sorry to leave our good friends, the Babbits, not to mention the Brownsboro Poet.

VI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

As it was too late to take the train that morning, we decided to wait for the one that left the station in the afternoon.

We packed up our belongings and were ready for departure immediately after lunch.

Mr. Babbit drove his old team and rickety wagon to the door promptly on the minute. Mrs. Babbit, Mary, and Roy came out to tell us good-bye.

"Now, boys," said Mr. Babbit, "we have no time to lose: Say good-bye and let's be off. Jump in. It's a good three miles to the station, you know."

Roy looked his regret as we shook hands with him.

Mary hung back a little, and I fancied there were traces of tears in her eyes when we parted; I know I felt a lump in my own throat as I took her hand.

Mrs. Babbit said, in a kindly tone, "Never

The Poet and Nature

mind; we'll see all the boys again next Summer,
I am certain."

"Sure you will!" we answered with a shout.

At the gate we saw Silas standing, hat in hand, and grinning with every inch of his mouth.

I tossed a quarter into his hat as we drove by, and John shouted, "Take care of the bees, Si! And don't let them sting you again!"

"Yaas, sah!" guffawed the old darkey as he closed his hard fist over the quarter; "I'ze gwine ter see ter dat! yaas, sah!"

We passed the old mill with regret in our hearts. And as we rumbled over the covered bridge Mr. Babbit drew a piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to me.

"This is a parting-shot, Harry, which our friend, the Brownsboro Poet, requested me to deliver. It is a poem written for you boys. You may put it in your diary, if you like;" he said, as I turned it over and began reading.

It was a sonnet and bore the title, "The Oversoul:"

Lord of the Oversoul, high Power! a part
Of life's great purposes! bright Essence, bound
To lofty deeds; one with Earth's common round,
Having dominion o'er the human heart,

Homeward Bound

Through whom you build your worlds without a sound—

Keep those in mind, in whom the rare seeds start
Of beauty; dreams, that mortals christen Art,
And Love, of which great Nature is the ground.
Exert for them that power, held on high!
And wield your sceptre for their strength of mind!
Sustain their weakness! shield the instrument
Through which you labor, from the needs that lie
Around all life! and in a way as kind
Fulfill your purpose of divine intent.

As I finished reading we reached the station and heard the whistle of the coming train.

“It’s fine, Mr. Babbit!” I exclaimed, gathering my luggage together, and shaking hands with him before I leaped to the platform with Charlie and John.

“I’ll put it in my diary, of course! Good-bye!”

From the window of the train we waved our hands and called “Good-bye.”

Mr. Babbit called back, “Good-bye!” And before the train pulled out, shouted, “Don’t forget ‘The Oversoul,’ remember! That’s a prayer for all who strive for the true and beautiful!”

THE MORNING ROAD

A Selection of New Nature
Poems Hitherto Unpublished

“The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the centre. For the world is not painted, or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe. . . .

“For poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings, and attempt to write them down, but we lose ever and anon a word, or a verse, and substitute something of our own, and thus miswrite the poem.”

From *The Poet*, by R. W. EMERSON.

The Morning Road

THE MORNING ROAD.

The Morning drew a shawl
Of misty lace around her,
And by the wood's high wall
Stood smiling, bright and tall,
When I, who heard her call,
Went forth and found her.

Upon the sun-kissed hill,
And in the vale below,
She'd dropped a daffodil,
Golden and chaste and chill,
And on the water-mill
A rose of snow.

She said, “At last you've come,
And left the world's carouse,
The palace and the slum;
No more shall soul be dumb;
Come; look at your new home—
A pleasant house.”

Then took me by the heart,
And led a magic way,
By paths that are a part
Of Faeryland, and start
From the forgotten mart
Of Yesterday.

The Morning Road

And when we'd gone a mile,
She pointed me a place
O'er which there hung a smile;
And on its sill and stile
A promise, without guile,
As of a face.

And in the doorway there,
A baby at her breast,
One stood, quite young and fair,
Peace, with the golden hair,
Peace, that knows naught of care,
But only rest.

I knew at once 't was she,
For whom all mortals long,
Who, with simplicity,
And faith, that's sweet to see,
Dwells, guarding constantly,
Her child, named Song.

She bade me enter in;
Sit by her quiet fire;
Forget the world of din,
And safe from hate and sin,
With her and Song to win
My heart's desire.

Miching Mallecho

MICHING MALLECHO.

“Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief.”—Hamlet.

The crickets tease the dusk with tune,
And from the lily-padded pool
The green-frogs hail the rising moon,
Earth-summoned like a great toadstool.

The Elf of Mischief is abroad,
Torched by a jack-o'-lantern ray,
Hosting the woodland, rock and road,
With the wild minions of her play.

The spider casts a web across
Their revels that no eye perceives;
While slowly from concealing moss
The mushroom broad its table heaves.

The moth takes flight from bloom to bloom,
To courier news through all the dells;
And from the straitness of their room
The gnats put out their sentinels.

The beetle in the dead wood ticks—
An armored guard; the firefly,
With gleaming points, the darkness flicks—
The goblin watch of Witchery.

The Faery Ring

This is the path the Queen will pass
Upon her palfried snail, as planned,
Where Mystery has gemmed the grass
With dew, dim-dropping from her hand.

The fairy-life is out and waits
Its Queen, who holds her audience
Here in the heart of her estates—
The angle of this old rail-fence.

Round which the flowers have built a bower
Of lace, above which soon the moon
Will hang her lamp, and at which hour
You, too, shall see their twinkling shoon.

THE FAERY RING.

The moon, white as a cotton-flower,
Hung broad above the hill,
When from the old oak's toppling tower
The owl cried and was still.

There came a stealthy sound; and then
The cricket hushed its tune,
And here and there and back again
The bat dodged by the moon.

The woodland held its breath to see
What was it would befall;
And underneath each bush and tree
The flow'rs stood listening all.

The Wood Spirit

Again there came that stealthy sound,
As secret as the dew;
And then I saw upon the ground
The toadstools thrusting through.

And at each toadstool's root there stood
An elfin-thing that pushed,
And leaned, and harkened in the wood
To hear if all was hushed.

Then round the toadstools, white as milk,
They danced, with flying locks,
Their trousers made of moonflower-silk,
Their gowns of four-o'-clocks.

A cricket piped, a frog drummed near—
In pixy minstrelsy.
And round and round in moonlight clear,
They led their revelry.

Until far off I heard a cock
Crow—and the elves were gone,
Leaving these toadstools by the rock
For us to see at dawn.

THE WOOD SPIRIT.

The old trees stood around,
Making no sound,
Breathless, and watching something
on the ground.

The Wood Spirit

As, tiptoe, I drew near,
A sense of fear
Grew in me of a wonder to appear.

The brook cried, "Have a care!"
A thrush, "Beware!"
And then I heard a wild foot dancing
there.

Who could the dancer be?
What mystery
Held now the wood in such anxiety?

I stopped a while and spied
On every side—
Who danced there?—one the old
trees sought to hide?

Was it a Faun?—or, what?
There was a plot
To keep me back, to hold me from
the spot.

Again I made advance—
And, there! a glance
Of one, a girl, dancing a wildflower
dance.

But hardly had I seen
When, quick, between
My eyes and her a great bough
thrust its screen.

Autumn

And the deep wood gave out
A mighty shout,
And in my face, ere I could turn
about,

A bramble struck me fair.—
I did not care,
But through the thorny thicket burst
to stare—

On no one.—Just a tree
Confronted me,
And looked as innocent as it could be.

Only, in trunk and bough,
I felt, somehow,
At my confusion it was laughing now.

AUTUMN.

In the misty valley, Autumn, moving drowsily,
Slipping rings of marigolds on her chilly fingers,
Binds her gipsy locks with gems as she wanders
frowsily
'Mid the ageratum stalks where in dreams she
lingers.

In the fields her footprints shine in aster-glim-
merings,
And by streams, o'er which she leans as above
a mirror,

Autumn

Gazing on her face awhile in its lacy shimmerings
Of the mist that swathes her form when the
dusk draws nearer.

In her hand she folds the bee, crooning soft and
honeyly,

Then within a gentian-crib bids its heart be
quiet;

And the butterfly she takes, winging over sunnily,
Drops it weary on a rose saying, "There! rest
by it!"

And all night one hears her gown rustling sere
and frostily

As her creaking shoes go by with their cricket-
buckles;

Through the moonlight, past the door, stealing
gray and ghostily,

Now upon the pane she taps with her twig-like
knuckles.

Somewhere yonder, in the dark, where the owl
hoots—meagrely

Death is waiting, grim and gaunt, in the fading
forest;

Bleak of face and hollow-eyed, who shall seize her
eagerly,

Drag her to the underworld when the storm is
sorest.

Ragweed

RAGWEED.

To me

There is a mystery

In what the crickets sing,

The beetles drone, or, with its vibrant
wing,

The grig may say,

Chanting both night and day.

I know there's sense

And beauty in the way

The mud-wasp molds the clay,

Fashioning its hollow cell.

There's no pretence

In Nature, son, for I have seen

Many a riddle solved, and been

Laughed at for being a fool by many
a one.

Well, well!

But now to tell you, just for fun,

What happened to me yonder, in the
sun,

The broad daylight, there by that old
rail-fence:

Upon a ragweed stalk, like Puck,
a-swing,

Green as a katydid's wing,

Snared in a spider's web, stretched
taut and tense

Ragweed

Above a woodland spring,
I found a fairy thing,
Dressed in a tattered green;
A jaunty cap,
The emerald husk of some slim pod
 or bean,
Perched on his head; crook-kneed
He sat,
As watchful as a cat,
Alert and hard to find; a ragged
 scrap
Of weed himself; or like a roguish
 seed
That cuddles snugly in a pea-pod's
 flap.
I knew it for a goblin, without doubt,
The spiderweb had snared itself
 about—
He squatted, grinning, in the broad,
 bright noon,
Humming a small-gnat's tune.
And ho!
Right so
He eyed me, hide and hair,
At first severely,
A moment merely,
Then yawned, a tiny yawn, that
 hinted clearly,
That I could go!

Ragweed

That said,
With a side gesture of the head,
“I can dispense, sir, with your com-
pany!”
Then stretched himself as if to show
He did not care to know
Who the huge creature was that
stopped to see
What he himself might be;
And stood to watch him swinging
airily.

’T was all put on; designed indifference!
I had *some* sense,
Albeit he would not see,
Or not acknowledge it could be!
For he assumed a most offended air,
And fixed a stare,
Unmoving, on the old rail-fence;
And then,
Ere I had counted ten—
Tap, tap!
He stooped and gave a rap,
A tiny rap, upon the ragweed stalk;
Then bent and listened, leaning close
an ear,
As if was aught to hear;
Mayhap the insect-talk
I’ the heart o’ the weed—

Ragweed

Some pixy thing, mayhap,
Not bigger than a seed—
Indeed—
Whose message seemed most urgent,
 that was clear;
Delivered in the whining of a gnat,
Or woodfly, busy with the sugar-sap,
And careful of his answer to the tap.

Then, suddenly, the ragweed stalk
 went fat,
Right in the smooth place where he
 leaned to rap;
And, like a solid bubble o' green, a
 knob,
Bulged outward; and from forth it
 blew a blob
Of yeasty white, a silvery slime
 and—scat!
As quick as that,
He vanished into *it*—shoes, coat,
 and hat—
And, where he'd sat,
A cowspit fleck, from which my clue
 was drawn,
Showed me the way he'd gone.

But quick!—
Knowing his trick—
I cut the very stick
Of ragweed through the middle,

Pan of the Beech Woods

The stalk I have here, which I know
for sure
Holds him a prisoner.—
There where you see it frothed and
swelled,
Tight as a fiddle
He hides inside.—Now! Watch me!—
scut!
You see now where I held,
I hold and cut
The very spot! And—there!
Now mark him in his lair!—
Tut! tut!
I brought him home for you to see!
But,
He has escaped! and left, most cleverly
A small green worm to fool us, eh?
But that's his way!
And, let me tell you, sir, however
that may be,
That small green worm is—he!

PAN OF THE BEECH WOODS.

Down there in the old beech woods,
Where the screech-owl sits and broods,
And the rocks fume with the creek,
Each a foam-fleck on its cheek,
Pan keeps company with my moods,
Running when a foot intrudes—
Goat-foot Pan who oft eludes.

Pan of the Beech Woods

Once I heard him, where he sat
On a ferned and mossy mat,
Whistling like a thrush or chat.

I, you see, had quit my plow—
Couldn't work that day somehow—
And I followed—seemed to me
Dronings of a pipe, or bee—
Couldn't tell you which, I vow;
But it led from bough to bough
To the place we're standing now.

There I watched him all that day,
While he piped and danced away,
With the forest-things at play.

In the creek I saw a fin
Wink; and then a terrapin
Lift its head. A toad hopped out,
Croaked, and crept Pan's feet about;
He quit piping; took it in
His brown hand and set its chin
To his pipe and said, "Begin!"

And the toad began to blow
Music such as quavers low
In the marsh when dusk comes slow.

Nearing sunset as I drew
Home, I glimpsed him, peering through
Bush and brake; he seemed to stand
With his Pan-pipes in one hand,

Night's Revelries

Beckoning with the other to
Something in the trees, that flew
Down and muttered, “*Who are you?*”

And Pan chuckled; set his oat
To the owlet’s feathered throat,
Bade it blow a wildwood note.

As it blew I saw him smile;
Then he said, “You’ve had your trial!
You can *hunt* now. Twilight comes.
I must tune the beetle drums
And each cricket-harp and viol.”
Then *he* went. Each woodland aisle
Droned his passage. After while,

Far away upon a hill,
Heard him piping, “Whippoorwill!”
Listen! you may hear him still.

NIGHT'S REVELRIES.

Above the world,
Pale, dew-impearled,
Like lilies in blue pools of night,
The stars float white;
Enchantment is abroad with many a glowworm light
Of green and silver. . . . Look you! where,
With firefly-tangled hair,
She leans above the water there,
While, downy-winged, the great moon-moths take
flight.

Night's Revelries

To me it would seem right
To see him *now*—Puck, brown and bare,
Upon that web a-sway,
Or sliding down a ray
Of starlight with some fair, attendant fay;
Or, on that toadstool's top astride,
Squatting with arms akimbo, mouth ear-wide,
And upright slits of flame instead of eyes,
Watching and waiting till the full moon rise.

But what are those
So busy 'round that rose?
Those moth-like things,
And shapes, with beetle wings;
And there! snail-gray in frog-like-fitting clothes—
Where green that firefly glows—
Leaving a trail of silver, what are those,
Stilt-eyed and slow,
That come and go below
The rainbowed rows
Of morning-glory bells
And wine-stained shells
Of balsam blooms?
Do you suppose
That they are grooms,
Disguised, of Oberon? grim warders of his rooms?
Or fairy maskers that the Night
Sends through the goblin dusk
To tag with wet each mushroom's rim,

Faery Forest

Or tap and trim
Each bud until it open wide its petaled tusk?
Or brim
Its cup with dew and musk?

Let us steal near,
My dear.
Night's at her revelries
Among these flowers and trees.
Perhaps if we could seize
The moment, like those bees
So snugly huddled in that flow'r, we, too,
Might touch on things she dreams; and so behold
The invisible host, the crew
With which her heart makes bold
When all the world's asleep and no one looks,
Except the moon, who peeps in ferny nooks.

FAERY FOREST.

The freckled jewel-flower swings
Its blossom where the orchid blushed,
And, where the woodland deeps hung hushed,
The raptured veery sings. . . .
The Forest crooked an arm at me
And murmured with its leaves, "Come, see
The wonder and the mystery
That haunt the heart of things."

Faery Forest

And then I saw a spirit wild
That danced within the waterfall,
Or, like the beauty of a child,
Hung laughing over all;
I saw the fairy of the fern
Toss emerald locks at every turn;
And in the dew the elfin burn
That holds the rose in thrall.

I saw moon-presences of light
Glow into form and glimmer 'round;
And, with them, crystalling in sight,
The winds with wild flowers crowned.
I saw the Dryads sit at ease
Within the hiding hearts of trees;
And in the brambles, watching these,
The Faun that none hath found.

I saw the music all around,
The lisp of leaf, the water's song,
Evolve a form, a shape of sound,
That glimmered green along;
I saw the happiness that thrills
The heart of things, that ebbs and fills,
Dance with the rapture of the rills,
And leap the woods among.

A moment more and I had seen
The Fairy-Queen as on she fared;
And all that Nature's self may mean
To me had been declared.

Elfin

But, lo! there came a sudden lull
In action, and a step fell dull—
A mortal's . . . and the Beautiful
Fled, like a wild thing scared.

ELFIN.

I found a vale, a haunted dell,
Where, over all, there hung a spell;
And underneath a streaming stone
A glimmering spirit made its moan,
Now murmuring through a crystal shell,
Now on a harp of spar, while, blown
About the place, the wild foam fell.

I raised the rock that held it bound,
And, straight, it changed into a sound
That danced around me, dimly yet,
Smelling of fern and violet;
In mossy green and crystal gowned—
A silvery girl of shimmering wet,
Who round my form her cool arms wound.

Upon my eyes she kissed me thrice
With chilly lips of rosy ice;
And with her kisses, like the foam,
My heart grew light and fain to roam
Away from all Earth's human ties. . . .
And so it was I left my home
To dwell with Love that never dies.

The Dancer

THE DANCER.

Those gold marauders of the air,
The brown bees, bustling everywhere,
 Led me away
To where, in sulphur-colored showers,
The Autumn heaped her gold of flowers,
 And bound her hair
With all the beauty of their disarray.

Above her head the birds took flight,
And by her side a shape of light
 Danced like a Fay,
Who wove strange magic with the grace
Of glancing limbs and twinkling face,
 And raiment bright,
That blew like gossamers about the day.

Who was this creature, dancing past?
Who came and went, now slow, now fast,
 At airy play;
The goldenrod unto her feet
Kept time; and with her heart's wild beat,
 To the very last,
The Blackeyed-Susans set their heads asway.

I asked of flower and of tree:
“Who is this Elfin? what is she,
 So bright and gay?”

The Lost Garden

They murmured what I could not hear;
For she kept laughing in my ear,
 Bewildering me,
And whispering words too wild for me to say.

Then, in a moment, she was gone,
Flying a veil of cloudy lawn,
 Pinned with a ray;
And then I heard: "The Wind am I!
The Wind, who now must say good-bye,
 And go till dawn
And dance with stars and waves upon the bay."

And all night long, snug in my bed,
I heard her feet as far they led
 The dancing spray;
And to the moon and stars a shout
She raised and tried to blow them out;
 Then laughed and fled
To greet the dawn who walked on hilltops gray.

THE LOST GARDEN.

At close of day,
As once in childhood, through the meadows
 gray,
I took my way.

Faint scents of myrrh,
And twilight gleams of glimmering lavender,
Led me to her,

The Lost Garden

That fairy child,
Who, to her garden, with its beauty wild,
My soul beguiled.

I seemed to see . . .
Her eyes again, like fireflies, 'neath a tree,
Regarding me.

She seemed to stand
Fluttering the moon-moths with a dewy hand
Across the land.

And, following slow,
I came into a place I used to know
Long years ago.

A place of peace,
Guarded about by many stately trees,
The home of bees.

A garden place
Of flowers and fruits, through which I oft
would pace
In childhood's days.

And, following soft,
An elfin voice, that murmured oft and oft,
Far in the croft,

All suddenly
I saw her there, beneath a cedar tree,
Pale, beckoning me.

The Lost Garden

And with a smile
She took my hand and led my soul a while
Down many an aisle

Of flowers; and told
Of many dreams of beauty, known of old,
That now are mold.

And, as we walked
Along the paths the moonbeams whitely
chalked,
The flowers talked.

A rose-bloom said:
“He is returned, who thought this garden
dead—
It lives, instead.”

Another sighed:
“He is come back to her, who was his guide,
He dreamed had died.”

One said, “’Tis plain
She holds him still with all her elfin train
Through heart and brain.”

And all around
There grew a whisper, like a twinkling sound,
From air and ground.

It sang, “We’ve grown
Into the garden, making it our own
With dreams here known.

The Lost Garden

“With dreams, behold,
That, dancing, changed the darkness of its
mold
To fairy gold.

“Making it sweet
With mental messages of spirit feet,
That here still meet.

“For still they weave
Their spells within here. He, too, may
perceive—
We give him leave.”

And I, at that,
Beheld a secret place, a violet mat,
On which one sat.

A little lad,
Who seemed to have the face that once I had,
In days long glad.

And then a star
Fell, trailing heaven with a fiery scar.
And, from afar,

Glints of the moon
Showed where the elfins tripped it to a rune—
A cricket tune.

The House of Dreams

And, as they passed,
Around the boy their spirit spells were cast,
And held him fast.

Then they were gone,
Somewhere into the region of the dawn;
And night grew wan.

And in my ear
I heard a voice cry, "Wake! the dawn is near!
Be gone from here!"

And cold, afraid,
In that lost garden where, a child, I played,
I woke dismayed.

THE HOUSE OF DREAMS.

I know a house, that stands remote,
With garden, barn, and pigeon-cote,
Below a hill, beyond a wood.
Like some old face beneath a hood,
Its barn, with its one window-eye,
Gray-roofed, and musk with hay and rye,
Keeps watch upon the old post-road,
That wanders by,
Down which goes many a creaking load.

The House of Dreams

'Tis always Autumn there; the ways
Are strewn with leaves; all day a haze
Spreads o'er the land a glimmering veil;
At eve the lone wind lifts a wail,
And, nearing midnight, comes the rain
And taps each dripping window pane;
And in the barn, at dawn, a flail
Beats, and a wain
Pulls, apple-laden, to its rail.

Sleep carpets all its rooms, whose doors
And windows look on misty moors,
And on a marsh where wade and pipe
The wild duck and the long-billed snipe;
And over which the House beholds
The Morn come, wrapped in ghostly golds;
And Day retire, in wild estate
Of Storm—that folds
His couch with purple, glaring hate.

At dusk the moors disgorge the moon
Like some enormous egg; the loon
Screams somewhere, like a soul that's lost;
And everywhere a smell of frost
And sodden flowers and fruits and leaves
Makes mute the heart; a cricket grieves;
And one small window, seen afar,
Beneath vined eaves,
Gleams o'er the marsh like some bright star.

The Speckled Trout

And there *it* sits and dreams *its* dreams,
The soul, that is a part, it seems,
Of this old house, unto whose door
Couriers come riding evermore,
Splashed with the leagues of clay and wet—
They bring strange news, that none may let,
Of days long past and days to be—
Days men forget,
And days no man shall ever see.

THE SPECKLED TROUT.

With rod and line I took a way
That led me through the gossip trees,
Where all the forest was asway
With hurry of the running breeze.

I took my hat off to a flower
That nodded welcome as I passed,
And, pelted by a morning shower,
Unto its heart a bee held fast.

A head of gold one great weed tossed,
And leaned to look when I went by;
And where the brook the roadway crossed
The daisy kept on me its eye.

And when I stooped to bathe my face,
And seat me at a great tree's foot,
I heard the stream say, "Mark the place,
And undermine it rock and root."

The Twilight Witch

And o'er the whirling water there
 A dragonfly its shuttle plied,
Where wild a fern let down its hair,
 And leaned to see the water's pride:

A speckled trout—the spotted elf,
 Whom I had come so far to see,
Stretched out above a rocky shelf,
 A shadow sleeping mockingly.

* * * *

And I have sat here half the day
 Regarding it. It has not stirred.
I hear the running water say:
 “*He* does not know the magic word,

“The word that changes everything,
 And brings all Nature to his hand;
That makes of this great trout a king,
 And opes the way to Faeryland.”

THE TWILIGHT WITCH.

The Twilight Witch comes with her stars
 And strews them through the blue,
And breathes below the sunset bars
 A breath of meadow-rue;
She trails her veil across the skies,
 And mutters to the trees;

The Twilight Witch

Then in the weeds with firefly eyes
She wakes the Mysteries.
The Twilight Witch, with elf and fay,
Is creeping down the Slumber-Way.
Sleep, my dearest, sleep.

The Twilight Witch, with crescent moon,
Stoops on the wooded hill;
She answers to the owlet's croon,
And to the whippoorwill;
She bends above the reedy pool
And wakes the drowsy frog,
And with the toadstool, dim and cool,
Rims gray the old dead log.
The Twilight Witch comes stealing down
To take you off to Slumber-Town—
Sleep, my dearest, sleep.

The Twilight Witch with windy tread
Has entered in the room;
She creeps around your trundle-bed,
And whispers in the gloom;
She says, "I brought my steed along,
My fairy steed of gleams,
To bear you like a breath of song
Into the Land of Dreams.
I am the Witch, who takes your hand
And leads you off to Faeryland,
The far-off Land of Sleep."

The Gray Wood

THE GRAY WOOD.

The gray wood stood,
Windy and whistling, with its winter dream;
Its leafy hood,
Tossed at its feet, shuffled into the stream.

Across its breast
Was drawn a band of crimson and of gold,
While in the west
The sunset's sullen fires, in rage, grew cold.

It gave a cry,
Then tossed its arms and let its huge head sink,
As 'thwart the sky
The wild-geese drew their harrow, black as ink.

Then up and down
It moved its shaggy shoulders, and was still;
Slipped on a gown
Of mist and sat there, dimly, on the hill.

Till, silver bright,
Out of the east there came a lamp of fire;
And in its light
It breathed again, and doffed its gray attire.

But all night long,
Wringing its hands, I heard it wail its love,
Weird, wild with wrong,
Unto the Moon that moved cold-eyed above.

Doppelgänger

Then, nearing dawn,
I heard a dripping and looked forth to see—
The moon was gone,
And wood and sky were weeping wearily.

DOPPLEGÄNGER.

Oh, I went down the old creek, the cold creek, the
creek of other days,
And on the way I met a ghost, pale in the moon-
light's rays,
The ghost of one, a little boy, with whom my
heart still plays.

He looked at me, he nodded me, he beckoned with
his pole,
To follow him where oft he'd gone to that old
fishing-hole,
In checker of the shade and shine beneath the old
beech bole.

The old hole, the dark hole, wherein we marked
the gleam
Of minnows streaking, silvery rose, and in its deeps
a dream
Of something gone forever down the glimmer of
the stream.

Doppelgänger

The old hole, the deep hole, o'er which we watched
the flash

Of bronze and brass of dragonflies, and listened
for the splash

Of frogs that leapt from lilyed banks when round
them we would dash.

He stood beside me there again, with fishing-pole
and line,

And looked into my eyes and said, "The fishing
will be fine!"

And bade me follow down the stream and placed
his hand in mine.

But it was strange; I could not speak, however I
might try,

While all my heart choked up with tears, and I
could only sigh

And whisper to myself, "Ah, God! if I could only die!"

He laughed at me, he beckoned me, but I—I stood
wide-eyed;

A spell was on my soul, I knew, that kept me from
his side,

A spell that held me back from him—my boyhood
that had died.

'Twas there beside the old creek, the cold creek,
the creek of long gone-by;

I stood upon its banks awhile when stars were in
the sky,

And, oh, I met and walked with him, the child that
once was I!

The American Cuckoo

THE AMERICAN CUCKOO.

I.

Hark to the beat
Of strident-humming insects in the heat!
The pale-pink soapwort leans its anxious ears
Against the Summer, listening for the rain;
And where the vervain, like a face, appears,
 With eyes a-strain,
To see the Wind, there is a voice that nears,
 Whispering of storm again.

II.

It says, "The way
Was long and hot o'er fields of corn and hay,
And orchards, strewn with ruined fruit, that
 smelled
Of drouth; and vineyards where the filmy blue
Of grapes hung bubbles, hornet-stung, unswelled;
 And gardens too,
Where worms were busy and huge spiders held
 Sway in the webs they drew.

The American Cuckoo

III.

“So when I reached
A hollow of these hills, where woods had pleached
A cave to rest in, there I lay me down
And slept, until upon a bough there cried
A voice, that said, ‘Awake! the fields are brown
With drouth, and all the creeks and springs are dried.

Put on thy gown
Of clouds, fringed blue with rain, and seek outside
Welcome from farm and town.

IV.

“ ‘Go! take the road
Into the world on which the sun has glowed
Fiercely for days, withering up the land;
And, trailing wet along the dusty lane,
Cover the sun’s face with thy cooling hand;
And sweep thy train
Of moisture over all, and take thy stand
By Fever’s window pane.

V.

“ ‘Till he shall see
His reign is over, and glad flower and tree
Laugh; and the cattle in the fields rejoice.—
Wake from thy sleep, thou sluggard! rise and go
Into the land and slay Heat’s locust voice!
Let rivers flow,
And then above the sunset’s beauty poise
The glory of thy bow!” ”

Beauty

VI.

It was a bird,
God's messenger, the cuckoo, that I heard.
The wind arose, put on its cloak and came—
And every flower, that leaned an ear and heard,
Danced; and the skies put off their garb of flame,
 Shouting a word
Of blessing, 'mid which, calling its own name,
 Rejoiced a jubilant bird.

BEAUTY.

Through pools of feldspar heav'n, above which lies
One cloud's flamingo wing, the Inca, Day,
Wades downward to his death; along his way
Run little ripples of the sunset skies;
And every stepping-stone of mist he tries
With Midas foot, transforms its stony gray
To burning gold; until, with one red ray,
He sinks, and o'er him, stars, like bubbles, rise.
So should all beauty pass; in rich accord
With its surroundings; touching earth till all
Conform to it as an accessory;
Transferring to its features the regard
Of its own dreams, through which the spiritual
At last attains its immortality.

The Purple Flower

SPIRITS OF THE AIR.

All immaterial beauty, night and storm,
And wind and light, assume a different splendor
To such as see with the mind's eye and render
Worship to Nature of invisible form;
The sunset is a cauldron, where a charm
Is brewed; and dusk, a mighty Witch of Endor,
Busy with mystery; evoking slender
Dream-spirits of the stars that round her swarm.
Who has not walked with such, not felt the air
Of their swift passage, on the wind from far,
And followed footsteps heard within the heart,
Shall never feel strange fingers in his hair,
Lifting his soul into some farthest star,
Nor of his dreams become immortal part.

THE PURPLE FLOWER.

There is a flower that blooms for ill or good
Within the grove of Life. Its stalk is frail
Yet strong, and bends to every passing gale,
That breathes or blusters through the solitude.
Some call it "Doubt-and-Dream," and "red as
blood"
Its bloom; and others, when their efforts fail,
Name it "Despair-and-Die," and call it pale:
For unto each 'tis differently imbued.

The Wind of Spring

And yet the flower, fashioned like a star,
Is neither white nor crimson, but deep blue;
Its name is "Hope and Wait." The color-blind
But see it otherwise, and, seeing, mar
Its attributes, from which it takes its hue
According to man's attitude of mind.

THE WIND OF SPRING.

A wind, that smelled of honey and dew,
Out of the gates of the Morning drew,
And over the clover meadows blew.

It called to the bird on its bough, "Awake!
Breathe of my breath, and fill the brake
With joy of your song for its sweetness' sake."

And the bird sat up on its bough and sang
'Till the leaves peeped out and for rapture sprang,
And all the aisles of the orchard rang.

And its mate came singing, and straightway they
Started to build on the topmost spray
Of the apple tree; and sang all day.

And the wind, to the boughs of the apple-tree,
Spoke a word: "Now, listen to me!
Open your eyes, so you may see!"

The Wind of Spring

And at its word, without ado,
The little buds crowded the brown bark through,
And took great joy of their own bright hue.

And the glad wind kissed them and farther fled,
And found on the earth a violet bed,
And stooped and whispered: "Lift your head!

"Wake! for Love, you know, is near—
The Love that the Earth holds very dear.
Here is a jewel for each one's ear."

And straight there sparkled a drop of dew
In every violet's ear of blue,
To greet young Love as his feet passed through.

And Love, who was early up and out,
Heard the bustle and laugh and shout,
And wondered what 'twas all about.

And the Wind cried, "Come and follow me;
The Earth is waiting with blossom and bee
For you to walk 'neath the orchard tree."

And Love came wondering, starry-eyed,
Like a little child, down the green hillside,
And before him went the Wind who cried:

"Come, birds, and bees, and butterflies;
And, blossoms, look with all your eyes!
This is the Love that never dies!"

Miracles

THE MAY MOON.

Dusk lifts high an opal-tinted
Chalice brimmed with pearly wine;
And upon a salver, minted
Of the sunset, lets it shine
Deep within a golden shrine,
Showing there a moony line.

In its light, on owlet pinions,
Witchcraft takes her drowsy flight;
And Enchantment with her minions
Of the dew and glowworm-light,
Leads her pageant through the night
Over every vale and height.

In her train, as by it dances,
Lo, again a Dream I knew
In my youth, before me glances
Dimly in the moon and dew,
Dancing back, O Heart, to you,
Elfin-like, through rose and rue.

MIRACLES.

Ripple on ripple, from the east,
The golden stream of morning runs;
The dark world doffs its grays and duns;
And high o'erhead Night's robes are creased
With azure—deep as Solomon's
When he sat throned at feast.

The Wharves of Slumber

And glittering as David when
He rode to battle, brazen-helmed,
And prayed his God and overwhelmed
His foes and flamed among his men,
The sun comes forth—a king, proud-realmed,
Who takes his throne again.

One last long spear of golden-gray
The Twilight lifts, then lays aside;
And one white star, that tries to hide
Its flower there, reveals a ray;
Where, like to Ruth, dark, dewy-eyed,
Dusk goes her glimmering way.

Then like the state—which went before
Queen Sheba, when, with footsteps slow,
She paced the wise King's portico—
Eastward a light grows, more and more;
And then, a goddess, face aglow,
The moon, at Heaven's door.

THE WHARVES OF SLUMBER.

Upon the wharves of Slumber
I watched the Ships of Dreams
Come sailing in through mist and moon,
With glowworm lights and gleams.

The Wharves of Slumber

Their holds were stuffed with plunder
Of every land and time;
With Ophir gold and gods of Greece,
And scraps of ancient rhyme.

Pastiles of Cretan henbane,
And bales of Yemen silk,
With cassia buds and sandalwood
And Oman pearls like milk.

And slaves, both men and women,
Most fair to look upon,
Whose chanting made the breeze to blow
That swept the Dream Ships on.

I had the pick and taking
Of every cargo there—
The spice and gold, the gems and slaves,
And myrrh and pearls and vair.

But while I stood debating
What thing to take and choose,
A voice cried, “Lo! the good ship Dawn
Draws in across the dews.”

And all the Dream Ships vanished,
And left me wide awake
To think of many, many things
It had been mine to take.

Night Magic

NIGHT MAGIC.

In cobalt raiment, glinting
With stars, beneath the pines
Night walks, the forest printing
With moonbeam-jeweled lines.

Within her footsteps follow
The dews and glowworm-gleams,
And out of hill and hollow
The murmur of hushed streams.

The wildflowers there that dapple
The road and kiss her feet,
Lean over—rose, May-apple—
And whisper something sweet.

The wild bird, drowsy-dreaming,
For her indulgence begs,
And chants a song, in seeming,
That echoes in its eggs.

The bud, that nods unfolded,
That holds its flower in mind,
The mushroom, still unmolded,
Crowd her dim steps behind.

Agog to see who follow,
In fernseed-twinkling shoes—
The Fays, of hill and hollow,
Who bring the flowers news

The Temple of Night

Of Elfland and its towers,
Where nothing ever dies,
That knows *these* are not flowers,
But Fairies in disguise.

THE TEMPLE OF NIGHT.

Columns of crystal lazulite
The stormy vapors pile,
Building a temple, vast, where Night,
Clothed like a queen in cloudy white,
On her dark face a smile,
Moves down a Titan aisle.

A robe of twice-dyed byssus drifts
Around her manifold,
As in her hands the moon she lifts,
Her beauty glimmering starry gifts
Of clustered pearl and gold,
King Chaos gave of old.

Around her troops a spirit-train,
Transparent as the air;
Peris and Afrites of the rain,
And Deev and Jinn, who bind again
The winds within their lair,
With wildly flowing hair.

Dawn in the Hills

The azure darkness of her face
Assumes its old time charm;
And, lo! again, in pearly lace,
She walks; the moon—a crystal vase,
Under one cloudy arm—
Above the world's alarm.

DAWN IN THE HILLS.

Morn, like a hallelujah, storms the sky;
The colors vie
With one another—now in crimson dye,
And now in golden—as if saints went by
In clouds of glory with a mighty cry,
The mists, like censer smoke, far-circling, fly.

The Earth, in adoration, seems to kneel,
And, worshiping, feel
The awe and wonder that the heavens reveal;
Above her, whom the rapture seems to heal,
Splendor on splendor, wheel on burning wheel,
The hues, like vast cathedral music, reel.

Let us stand up, O Heart, and with one voice,
Like Heaven, rejoice!

Give praise to God! And, with the soul at poise
Forget awhile the little, mean annoys
Of life! Its tools and all its foolish toys!
And like the hills and heavens make Beauty our
high choice!

Above the Hills

ABOVE THE HILLS.

Twilight, and whippoorwill, and firefly,
 And then,
Within the evening sky,
 One star,
 As if, afar,
The Day would say, "Amen."

Now 'tis as if one lifted up a face
 And saw,
Just for a moment's space,
 A presence,
 Or godlike essence,
Passing, august, in awe.

Dusk and the cricket and the moon;
 A bird
Quavering a good-night tune—
 Or, no!
 The afterglow
Speaking, low-breathed, a word.

And now from somewhere in the hills there comes
 A sigh,
As when the world succumbs
 To rest,
 Her weary breast
Bidding all toil good-bye.

Home-Return

And, from the soil, soft mists arise, and airs,
It seems,
That are Earth's dreams and prayers.—
Ah, would
That we, too, could
Behold what 'tis she dreams!

HOME-RETURN.

Retired as Happiness, that holds
The memory of a grief that's gone,
The old house, like a man who folds
His arms and faces toward the dawn,
Stands there. Above it shines the star
Of twilight; and around its gate
 Crowd many dreams, that naught may bar,
 And memories no time can mar,
 That our home-coming seem to wait.

All is at peace. The land around
Seems dreaming of divinities
That once in childhood here we found;
Or listening for the mysteries
That whispered to our innocence,
Of that which held a flower in thought,
Or of a tree's experience,
Or of the wind—in evidence
Of dreams with which our minds were fraught.

Clouds

SUNSET CLOUDS.

Taloned with lightning, in the west—
Beneath whose breath the woods are bowed—
Like some vast monster o'er its nest,
 There sweeps a cloud.

And near and far a blackness falls,
And Fear has no safe place to hide;
Then echoing through the sky's huge halls
 There goes a stride.

And then a bow of flame is bent;
An arrow speeds, a burning wire;
The cloud's great heart is torn and rent,
 And vomits fire.

Its huge wings droop; its bosom bleeds;
And, drowned in blood, it turns a fawn,
Whom night, o'er blue and starry meads,
 Hunts on and on.

CLOUDS.

The sunset crowns itself with storm,
From which a form
Of demon darkness lifts an arm,
And into sight a mountain heaves.

A sun-ray touches it; it turns
An isle that burns,
Upon whose shores blaze giant ferns,
'Mid which the mortal eye perceives

Matins

Plumed savages that launch long boats;
Towards which there floats
The wreck of Sindbad; and far motes,
Like Rocs, that trail vermillion wings.

The island sinks; and in its place
An Afrite face
Glares, rising from a genii vase
Of stars and moon that Evening brings.

A Dream treads dimly down the Hall
Of Evenfall;
And from the Night's gigantic wall
Lets fall a scarf—a meteor.

And then, behold! a mighty hand,
That points a land
Of mysteries, no eye has scanned,
Where all Life's dreams and longings are.

MATINS.

What has the Dawn decided on?—
Silver and fawn?
Crimson and gold?
Or a gown of lawn?
Fold on fold,
A mantle of mist around her drawn,
As oft of old?

Matins ·

Yesterday she went her way
In a cloak of gray,
 Laced with rain;
The like array
 She may don again,
And, as a nun, with a face like clay,
 Pace hill and plain.

Or, now suppose, as her way she goes,
She wears a rose
 Of fire and dew,
And a cloak, that blows,
 Of windy blue,
And a cap of red, where a feather glows,
 A cloud or two.

In no other wise you will see her rise—
Her calm, clear eyes
 With joy elate;
Before she tries
 High Heaven's gate,
And down the Garden of the Skies
 Leads bright her state.

And with her brings, oh, many things—
A lark that sings,
 And gladness of heart;
A flower that springs,
 And hope that's part
Of the soul, that lends to life new wings.
 To soar and dart.

The Wood Girl

THE WOOD GIRL.

Sweet as an apple, rosy to the core,
Her bosom shone, bared to the wind and sun;
Musing she sat within the woodland hoar,
Watching the wild creek run.

She came upon me in the blossoming bush
As might a Naiad by enchantment bound,
Within a secret place of bloom and hush
And dewy-dripping sound.

But for the water, struggling with a stone,
And breeze that searched, playing at hide and seek,
That led me on, I never would have known—
It was so lone a creek.

But coming on her, so crepuscular,
A glimmering girl, watching the water flow,
She seemed a spirit from some other star,
Or Nymph of long ago;

Warden of minnows, shepherding their way;
An unreality, a woodland dream
She seemed; 'round whom the dragonflies, at play,
Flashed many an elfin gleam.

And now she leaned, listening a bubble-word
That warned the thrush of some awaiting snake,
That, hiding where the lonely water stirred,
Lay with dull eyes awake.

Autumn Equinox

I watched her sitting, marveling at her face,
A thought had touched, a dream that held her fast—
A Naiad must have looked so in some place
There in the old Greek past.

And then I heard a note—a crystal sound—
A thrush; the syrinx, seeming, of a Faun;
A bramble snapped, and, quick, she turned
around—
And, lo, the spell was gone.

And I was looking into wondering eyes—
A little girl's, who rose and fled from me,
Startled—as oft a Naiad, in surprise,
Fled there in Arcady.

AUTUMN EQUINOX.

The clouds build black a giant hall,
'Round which the winds like madmen stride,
Wild voices call from wall to wall,
And earth is tossed from side to side.

Fury and Madness meet at board,
And sit at feast. Anon they rise,
And thunderous sword smites thunderous sword,
And each one by the other dies.

Then suddenly a crimson hand
Hurls wide a window, deep as doom,
At which a Demon takes his stand,
Burning within a burning room.

The Gipsy

The casement slowly closes down,
And leaves a crack at which appear
Two windy lights that glare and frown,
And seem the bloodshot eyes of Fear.

The sun is gone; and from the East
There comes a dripping step and lamp—
The wind's wild maunderings have ceased;
The moon looks down on dew and damp.

THE GIPSY.

Deep in a wood I met a maid,
Who had so wild an air
Her beauty made my heart afraid,
And filled me with despair.

She wore a gown of gipsy dyes,
That had a ragged look;
The brown felicity of her eyes
Was like a mountain brook.

Around her hair, of raven hue,
Was bound a gentian band,
And from each tree the wild birds flew
And fluttered to her hand.

The crow sat cawing in the thorn
As if it, too, would greet
Her coming; and the winds of morn
Made music for her feet.

Autumn Winds

Barefooted down the wood she came
Bearing a magic rod
That left the leaves it touched aflame
And aster-starred the sod.

I spoke to her! "Tell who you are!
So fair, so wild, so free!
A being from some other star?
Or wildwood witchery?"

She smiled, and, passing, turned and said:
"You do not know me then?
Why, I am she, you long deemed dead,
Autumn, returned again!"

AUTUMN WINDS.

What voices are these,
Crying upon the hills?
The Winds of Autumn
Tossing and bowing the giant trees!
Winds of Death,
Jubilant, acclaiming,
Filled with imperious portent,
Declaring, demanding;
Bidding the world put off its raiment of gold and
of scarlet,
Its mantle of pride and arrogance,
And don the garments, ashen and sober,
Of melancholy and repentance.

Where the Gray Mists Whirl

I hear their voices, sonorous and mighty;
In their music
Shawms and cymbals and sackbuts vie with one
another,
Reeling and reverberating to the marching of
sombre hosts,
Giant-footed, funereal,
To whose sorrow the forests yield themselves,
Rocking to and fro
Like mad fanatics that toss and whirl,
Filled with the frenzy of death,
The god they celebrate—
Their stormy raiment whirling about them,
They dance, lugubrious
In their tattered mantles of leaves,
Intoning their hearts' desolation.

WHERE THE GRAY MISTS WHIRL.

At night, in the lonely marsh, 'tis dread,
When the autumn winds crowd 'round,
And the gray mists whirl, like the shrouded dead,
And the reeds make a ghostly sound.
At every step the moisture springs,
And down in the hollows a something sings,
And something mutters and mocks o'erhead,
And a footstep shuffles the ground.

Where the Gray Mists Whirl

A boy, who crosses it, hugs his book,
And runs like a hunted thing;
The winds blow hollow from every nook—
What noise is that they bring?
A sound of digging; a phantom spade,
That breaks the turf where a grave is made—
“Ho! ho!” What child would dare to look,
Hearing such laughter ring?

Like evil faces the black stumps stare,
And the pine-wood nods and leers;
What’s that? Dead grass? or human hair?—
In the stream that now appears;
And there where it drizzles and drones and dins,
He knows it the demon-woman who spins,
The fiend that turns her wild wheel there,
In the rustling reeds he nears.

On, on he hurries; some hurt, some harm
Behind him doffs disguise;
Before his feet black bubbles swarm,
And scraps of music rise;
It is the skeleton fiddler, ho!
Who scrapes a devil’s dance below—
That twisted thing, with horrible arm,
Who fiddles the coins from dead men’s eyes.

The marshland laughs; and a cry of dole
Grows out of the laugh, like an evil threat;
“Woe! woe!” it wails, “My poor, lost soul!
Why does it wander yet?”

The Trees and the Wind

At that he runs like a wounded deer.
Is there no guardian angel near?
He seems to see in the bog a hole
Where his bones lie, moldering wet.

At last the earth, firm earth, he feels!
Thank God for the meadowlands!
A lamp-lit window a house reveals—
His home near the marsh that stands.
He gasps and shudders and, standing still,
Looks back at the swamp where it stretches chill,
And shrinking, thinks of the Fear that steals
There with its strangling hands.

THE TREES AND THE WIND.

Squirrels are chattering;
Nuts are pattering;
Let's go play
In the woods to-day,
Where the wind with the trees
Is having his way.
You can hear him say,
"Take care of these
As you do of the bees.
Winter is coming;
The partridge is drumming;
And you must provide
Snug rooms inside,

The Trees and the Wind

Where the little gray jackets may
 house and hide.
I will blow you down and break you
 in two
If you don't do the thing I tell you
 to do!"

And the trees look wise
With their knot-hole eyes;
And nod their heads in a knowing way
As if to say,
"We know our business; don't you worry.
Leave us alone; don't be in a hurry.
The squirrels are fed,
And ready each bed
Of leaves and moss.—
Don't be so cross.
You're always ready
To fume and fuss
And quarrel with us.
Wish you were steady
And willing as we
To help the squirrel, the bird, and bee.
But like some people we know, you see,
In whom some worry is always brewing,
You're better at talking, Sir, than
 doing."

Let Us be Glad

LET US BE GLAD.

O, Heart, be like the swallow!
The bird whose blithe wings follow
Spring over hill and hollow,

Where leap the laughing flowers
On violet leas and levels,
Where Love his locks dishevels,
In faun-like romps and revels,
Wild-dancing with the Hours.

Have done with care that borrows
Old dread of far to-morrows;
Have done with ancient sorrows,
And fears that wail and weep;
Despairs, that know no sleeping,
And mem'ries, pale with weeping,
And dreams, like shadows creeping,
That shake the deeps of sleep.

Learn promise of the flowers,
The wind and sun and showers,
That rainbow-span the hours,
And vista wood and plain!
Have done with what is dreary!
With all that makes life weary!
And hearken to the veery,
Joy, singing in the rain.

The Faëry Child

It sings, “Come! let in laughter,
Dear Heart! and ever after,
Though low your roof and rafter,
And near your door a grave,
Cast off regret and sorrow,
And fear of what’s to-morrow,
And of good Earth go borrow
Song, like my own, that’s brave.”

EFFORT.

Effort is a fairy flower,
That can ope the gate
Of Life’s grim and gloomy tower,
Where the giant, Fate,
Sits and holds, within his power,
Fame, until shall strike the hour
Work will liberate.

THE FAËRY CHILD.

A wild rose in the east,
The rose of dawn;
A splendor, like the feast
Of Babylon.

A Faëry Child I met
Upon the way;
Her hair with dew was wet
And like a ray.

The Faëry Child

She met me with a laugh,
 And then a word;
While leaning on my staff
 I stood and heard:

“Come, let me walk with you
 The morning way!
Look in my eyes of blue—
 I am a Fay.

“I leave no songs unsung;
 My heart is brave;
Mankind I walk among
 To help and save.

“The world may have beguiled—
 Give it no thought!
Think on the Faëry Child
 It never caught.

“Who weaves you roses; rare,
 An anadem;
And far away from care
 Leads you 'mid them.”

A butterfly, a bee,
 Now there, now here,
She flew, then kisses three
 Gave eye and ear.

The House of Life

And all the road that leads
 Into the glooms,
Dark, overgrown with weeds,
 And marked with tombs,

Glittered in golden wise,
 As if for trysts
Of spirits of the skies,
 Clothed white in mists.

And lo! I looked again—
 The child was gone;
And down the dewy lane
 Came bright the dawn.

THE HOUSE OF LIFE.

To what old friend or foe
Do I this hostel owe?
This prison-house no presence knows
 but mine,
Part bestial, part divine;
This house wherein oft shine
The lamps of dreams, the taper-glow
Of thoughts; where ghosts glide to
 and fro—
Old ghosts of hate and love, that sunder
The silence with their breathings low;

Flowers

And, pale with wonder,
Hope and Despair, with footsteps swift
or slow,
Pace in the darkness, its chief chamber
under,
And come and go
Around the living clock that beats below.

I fancy He who willed it,
And out of silence drew
This house of joy and rue,
And with the darkness filled it,
Thought, in His Heart's high essence,
The wisest thing to do,
For me as well as you,
Was, in the walls He builded,
To hide, somewhere, the clue
That leads us to His presence
Above the starry blue.

FLOWERS.

These are the flowers God gives to earth
For each at birth:
Heartsease, Rosemary, and Rue,
That there in the Garden of Eden grew.

The first for thoughts, whatever the way,
Of life each day;
From which shall spring the kindly seeds
Of noble dreams and deathless deeds.

The Child in the House

The other two for memory
 Of life to be,
That in the Garden of the Heart
Grow into Love's own counterpart.

THE CHILD IN THE HOUSE.

I.

When from the tower, like some big flower,
The bell drops petals of the hour,
 That says, "It's getting late,"
For nothing else on earth I care
'Cept wash my face and comb my hair,
And hurry out to meet him there,—
 My father at the gate.

It's—oh, how slow the hours go!
 How hard it is to wait!
Till, drawing near, his step I hear,
And up he grabs me, lifts me clear
 Above the garden gate.

II.

When, curved and white, a bugle bright,
The moon makes magic of the night,
 A fairy trumpet calling,
To me this seems what's very best—
To kiss good-night and be undressed,
And held against my mother's breast,
 Like Christmas snow a-falling.

A Poet

It's—oh, how fast the time goes past!
The moments—how they leap!
Till mother lays me down and sings
A song, and, dreaming many things,
She leaves me fast asleep.

A POET.

All things must die, grow old—
We know this truth;
But Love, that is better than gold,
Shall outlast Youth.

The Love we give to Art,
That gives and gives
Itself in what is part
Of the soul that lives.

In song, that shall outlast
Marble and brass,
And with a word hold fast
All things that pass.

Praise for the poet, then!
Praise, that his rhyme
Keeps young the world for men
In spite of time.

The Coming of Winter

THE COMING OF WINTER.

The hungry glitter of War's wolfish eyes
Gleamed where the sunset dies;
And then the Wind stopped at the door and
 laughed,
Like one who tries
To mask his purpose with designing craft.

I knew 'twas Winter, stripping all of worth
In the fair House of Earth—
Of all its hoarded gold—and in its place
Leaving lean Dearth
To ape the skeleton, Famine, with her face.

Balsam and pimpernel and all the pearls
Of flowers that decked the curls
Of Summer, lo! he seizes for his band
Of vandal churls,
Famine and Frost and Death, with icy hand.

The panther-tawny hills crouch round and gaze,
Gaunt-faced, at Heaven; or raise
Huge claws of forest, stretching them to seize
The fields of maize,
Who, in their terror, seem to shrink and freeze.

The Coming of Winter

Some jewels Autumn dropped, when taking flight,
Mark with a starry white
The place she stood; and patches, red as fruit,
Among the blight,
Show, where she fled, the imprint of her foot.

Here lies the testament Earth keeps apart,
For Nature, in her heart;
Come, bend and read of all her joy and pride,
The beautiful art
She builds with, and that Love has sanctified.

In root and seed read of immortal things—
Of what again she brings
To life—dead Beauty, that no hand may bar;
Of Song's wild wings
And Color's palette, refuged now afar.

Take hope! though now she speaks her thoughts
in weeds
Instead of flowers, and pleads
In winds instead of birds, her book, though
sealed,
To him who reads,
Bears messages of Spring—to be revealed.

Old Christmas

OLD CHRISTMAS.

A CAROL.

I.

The north wind blows the snow-clouds up,
And through the snow the church bells ring,
While Love outside stands caroling;
So heap the fire and fill a cup,
And let us welcome Christmas in,
Who comes with goodly gifts for all,
Good gifts of Heaven and Earth for all,
To rich and poor with mirth for all,
To rich and poor with mirth!
Come, let us make sweet din, my dear,
To welcome Christmas in, my dear,
To welcome Christmas in;
And underneath the mistletoe,
Merrily, ho! merrily, ho!
Merrily, ho! begin.

II.

The frost is keen on field and knoll,
And lights are bright in church and hall;
Come, gather, gather, one and all,
And heap the fire and brew a bowl,
And welcome in old Christmastime;
Good will to all and peace to all,
Good will and peace on Earth to all,
Good will and joy and mirth to all,
Good will and joy and mirth!

Old Christmas

Come, join in ringing rhyme, my dear,
To welcome Christmastime, my dear,
 To welcome Christmastime!
And where the holly wreathes the wall,
 Merrily all! merrily all!
 Join in some Christmas mime!

III.

The snow falls fast; the ways are white;
The trees seem ghosts in winding sheets;
Loud on the pane the tempest beats;
Come, fill the house with candle-light,
And welcome in good Christmas-cheer;
Good cheer to all and love to all,
 Good cheer and love on Earth to all,
 Good cheer and love and mirth to all,
 Good cheer and love and mirth!
Around the fir-tree here, my dear,
Come, welcome in good cheer, my dear,
 Come, welcome in good cheer!
Then round the board till break of day--
 Merrily, hey! merrily, hey!
 Give a rouse for the coming year!

On the Farm

ON THE FARM.

With his boyhood who would be?
Back with friends so long apart!
Friends!—an oldtime company—
There to gossip, heart to heart,
Of the days that used to be!

With his boyhood who would be?
Home again, without a care?
Talking low and pleasantly
Of the things Life has to dare
In the days that are to be?

There the boy that used to be
Listens still with eyes like wine
To the tales of Faëry,
By the hearth-stone's crackling pine,
As in days of used to be.

With that boy who would not be
Back upon the road that leads
To the house beneath the tree,
Where Youth dreamed of mighty deeds
In the days of used to be?

Oh, my Heart! again to be
Back upon the oldtime farm,
Where Ambition gallantly
Wooed Achievement; took her arm,
Left the farm and poverty,

The Magician

And Content!—Ah me! to be
Listening to the stories told
'Round the hearth's felicity,
In the winter's snow and cold,
While the wind roared in the tree!

There was comfort!—Let it be!
Gone the house with open door!
Gone the peace and—poverty!
And the friends we knew of yore
In the days of used to be!

My old Heart, come, let it be!
Let us seek some place to hide
Far away from memory,
And the dreams that still abide—
Dreams of days that used to be.

THE MAGICIAN

That old Magician, Fall, steps in and cries
Before the curtain of the sunset skies:
At which a gate unlatches,
And, red-cloaked to the chin,
The Day, in shreds, he matches,
Of leopard-colored skin,
Goes out, and Night comes in,
A moon-ray 'mid his patches.

The Magician

Now East, now West he summons up a form,
That buttons close with stars a coat of storm:

Dim caps of purple asters,
And vests of iron-weeds,
The fields puts on; and, masters,
Blowing faint cricket-reeds,
Pass where the old lane leads
Into the mushroom-pastures.

The grass greens, satined white with frost,
A diamond carpet where his footsteps crossed:

Dawn enters; ruby glitter
Makes beautiful each trunk;
And in the fungous litter
Of woods, behold him sunk,
With his own magic drunk,
His bird-like mouth a-twitter.

At noonday he assumes a new disguise,
And on the hills a tawny panther lies:

How changed the world he touches!
The woodlands there reveal
Red gold within their clutches,
That hands, like leaves, conceal;
Or jewels, that appeal
Through forest rents, like smutches.

Deep crimson was his garb as he went by,
And on the mystic hills I heard him sigh:

“Now all my arts are ended.
Good-bye, sweet World, good-bye!”
And toward the West he wended,
Letting a feather fly,
That to his cap of sky,
One brilliant star pinned splendid.

Pandora's Box

PANDORA'S BOX.

Of fair Pandora and her Box, of old
You've heard, perhaps. It is a story told
Of how a woman brought into our world
The Evils, that have grown so manifold.

Sprung from that tribe of stones Deukalion hurled
Down Mount Parnassus, wise Prometheus came,
A Demigod, light-bringer, great of name,
And greater far of heart; and in his soul
There burned a fire, an all-consuming flame
To benefit mankind. And so he stole
Lightning from heaven; and, in hollow rods,
Brought it to man.

In punishment, the gods
Dispatched to Earth, bearing a Box, like gold,
A marvellous woman of celestial mold,
Endowed with every grace and charm the Hours
Bestow. Her name Pandora, whom the Powers,
Olympian, meant for Epimetheus,
The King, as wife,

And it was Mercury,
The cunning messenger of the gods, who brought
Pandora and her Box to Earth, and wrought
The world's undoing so.

Pandora's Box

Now it was thus:

Pandora, with the curiosity

Native to women, wondering what could be
Hidden within, and opening her Box to see,
Without intending, set the Evils free.

And thus it came that, crowned with blood and
tears,

War entered on our planet; Hate and Greed;
Distrust and Envy, with their numerous breed;
Famine and Pestilence; and all man fears
For those he loves.

Aware of what she'd done,
Pandora, ere the last remaining one
Escaped, clapped down the lid; not knowing who
Remained a captive, whether bad or good,
But one she thought of that infernal brood
The gods had sent.

How glad she was to find
That it was Hope who had remained behind.
But here's the reason, and I'll vow it's true:
Hope is a woman, and the Evils' crew
Being all men, to joy and beauty blind,
In their wild eagerness to get away,
Saw not Pandora.

But of different kind,
Being a woman, was Hope. *She changed her mind,*
And so was caught, by making some delay,
Admiring Pandora and the way
Her gown was cut, or just her eyebrows, say.

Finis

FINIS.

Broad, silver discs the morning-glory drops
Where, by the wayside, Autumn's pageant stops:

An opening mussel-shell, that shows

A streak of rose,

The dawn is; ready to disclose
The sun's red pearl above the hills' blue tops.

The cold fires of the marigolds, that raise
Their dripping torches by the garden ways;

And salvia's chilly lamps, that burn

Twixt flames of fern,

That flicker from the terrace-urn,
Seem fairy lanterns in the morning haze.

Those clouds of crystal—look!—dissolving, seem
Shallops that sail along a magic stream:

And—was't the wind far-off you heard?

Or elfin bird?

Bidding you follow at its word
Into another world of waking dream.

It is a road on which new Beauty walks
With every Commonplace of life: With stalks

And stacks of grain; the rustling corn;

Old shed and barn;

And well-sweep standing so forlorn,
Pointing you back to times of which it talks.

Finis

So with the morning in your hearts and eyes,
Suffer the world to take you with surprise,
As when, in childhood, there, at first,
 It held and nursed
Your wonder, ere with joy it burst
Suddenly on you in a new disguise.

[THE END]

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